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SPRING 1947

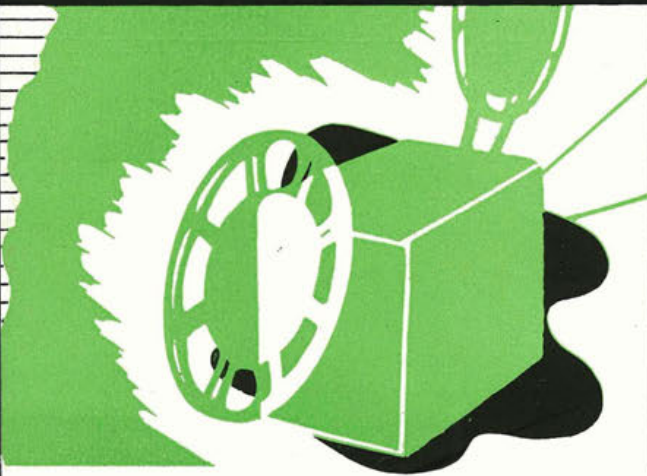
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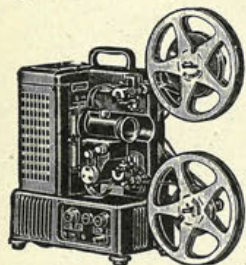
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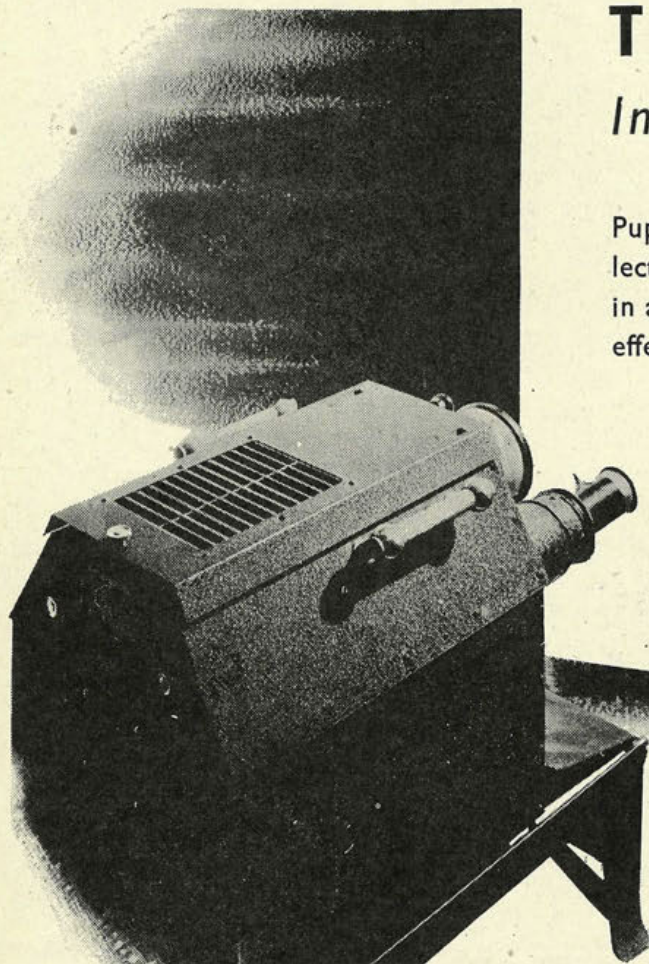
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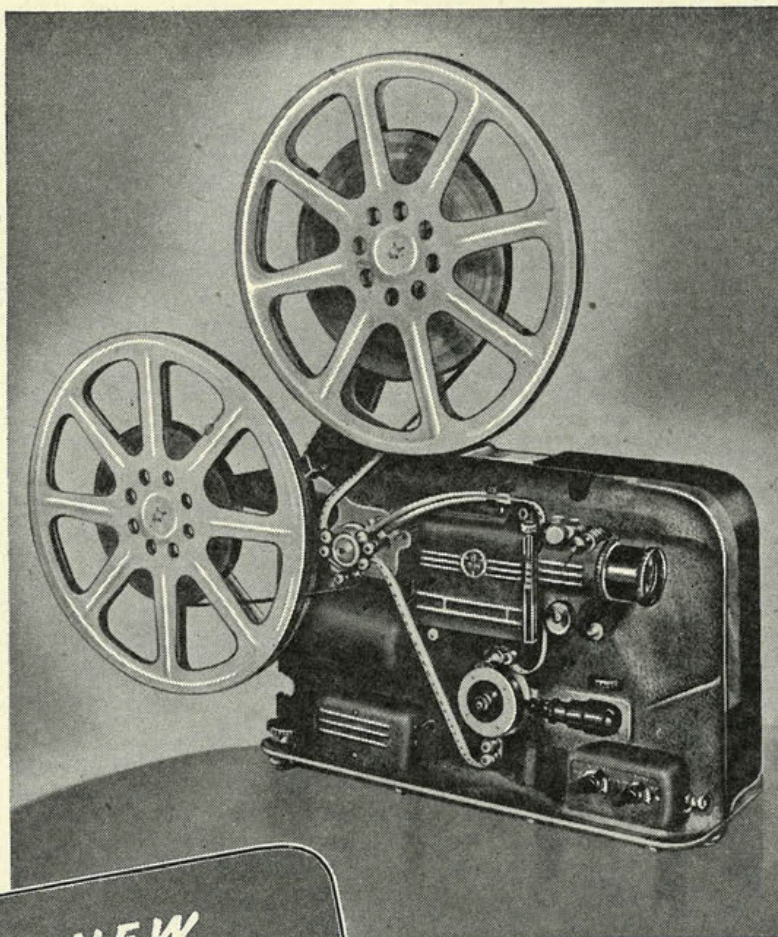


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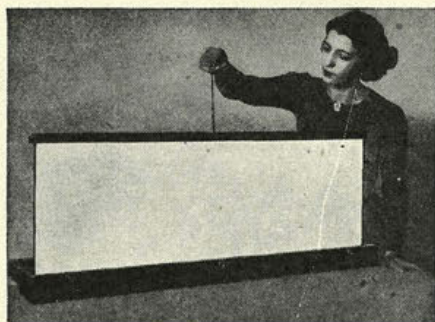
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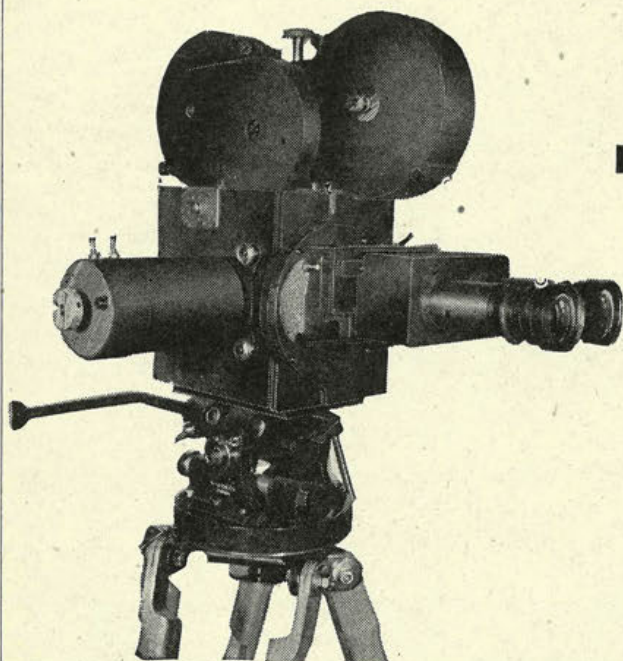
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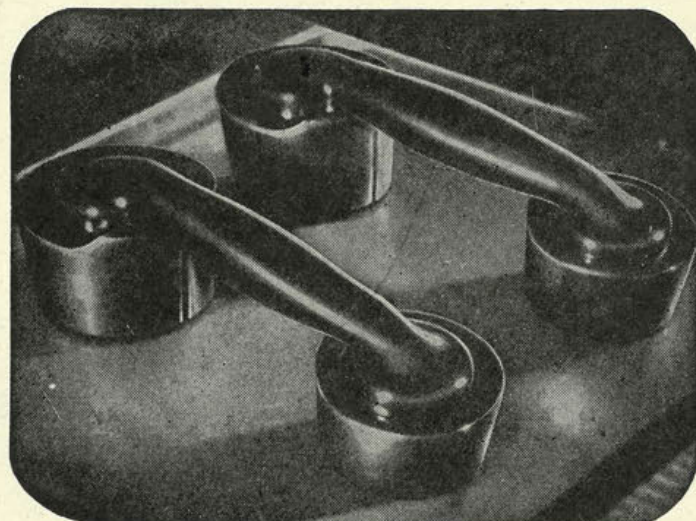
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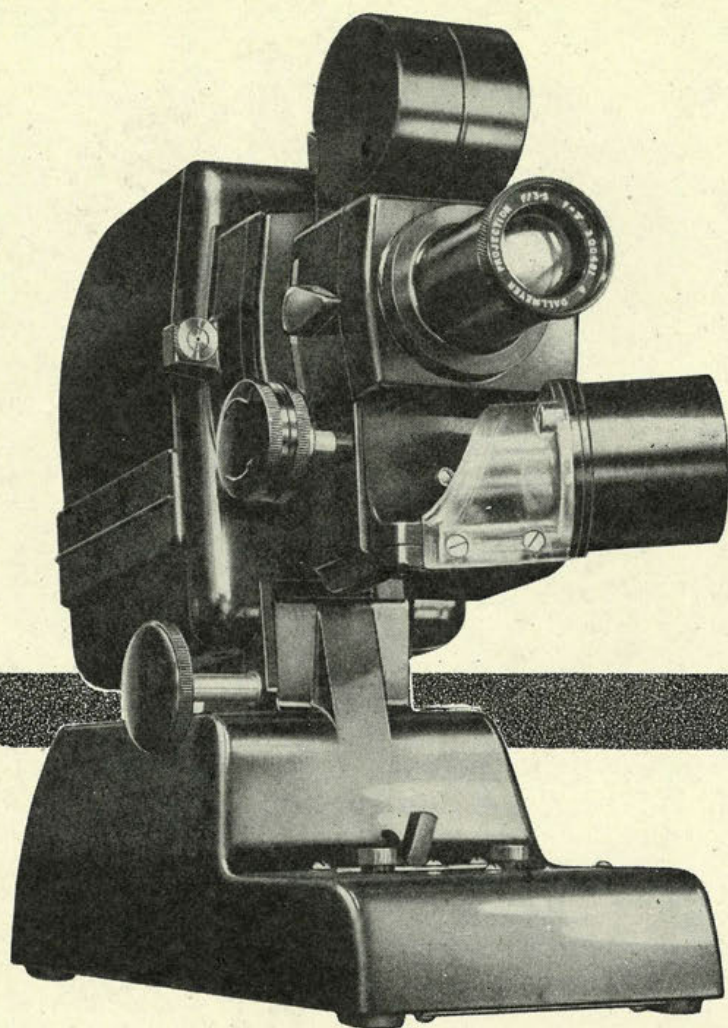
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CONTENTS

LUCIANO EMMER AND THE ART FILM: By Herbert F. Margolis	1	ANALYSIS OF PABST: An extract from the book "From Caligari to Hitler; A Psychological History of the German Film": By Siegfried Kracauer	21
ITALY'S FIRST SOUND CARTOONS: By Hugh Barty-King	4	AMERICAN LETTER: From Herman G. Weinberg	26
THE ITALIAN CINEMA BEFORE THE LIBERATION: By Arthur Vesselo	6	THE MOVIES MURDER ILLUSION: By Hermine Rich Isaacs	27
ANAGRAM: Book Review by J. M. Smithells	7	THE HISTORY OF THE CINEMA: An Experiment in Filmstrip	29
CUBAN CINEMA: By Ramond Del Castillo	8	A FILM ANALYSIS OF THE ORCHESTRA: By Hans Keller	30
THE REVIVAL OF THE GERMAN FILM: By H. H. Wollenberg	9	THE BIRTH OF A NATION: A reply to Peter Noble by D. W. Griffith and Seymour Stern	32
CEYLON AND THE CINEMA: By Tarzie Vittachi	12	THE CONTINENTAL SEASON: By Roger Manvell	36
THE CINEMA IN GUAYAQUIL: By A. W. Attwood	14	BRITISH FILMS OF THE QUARTER: By Arthur Vesselo	39
"FROM CHINA TO PERU . . .": An Account of some Films seen in France: By Patricia Hutchins	15	REVIEWS IN BRIEF	41
THE PHILOSOPHER AT THE CINEMA: By Roger Manvell	18	THE FILM SOCIETIES	42
		CORRESPONDENCE	44

COVER STILL: *Men Without Wings* (*Muzi Bez Kridel*) a Czechoslovak Resistance Film.

TO READERS

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LUCIANO EMMER AND THE ART FILM

By

HERBERT F. MARGOLIS

ON THE HEELS of the brilliant *Open City* there comes to light the exciting story of another group of Italian film experimentalists led by young anti-fascists, Luciano Emmer, his wife, Tatania Granding and Enrico Gras. After early inculcation in avant-garde aesthetics they formed the Dolimiti Film Producing Company to explore new artistic potentials for a cinematic language which was fast decaying under the fascist aegis.

At first they investigated the resources of editing, testing the ability of montage to give life and artificial movement to static objects. Working quietly at improvised home studios with their inherent technical handicaps they never knew from one moment to the next what they would beget. One of their earliest incubations was *Destino D'Amore*.

This unique satire of a romance between a chambermaid and an Italian soldier at the front was created through ingenious editing of the couple's picture-postcard exchanges. It was immediately banned by the Ministry of Popular Culture for being "a ridiculous insult to the

love life of the heroic fascist soldier". These stalwarts incurred further official wrath with a series of surrealist documentaries which lacked propaganda content and were unintelligible to the general audiences.

Since independent production had now become impossible without a fascist licence, the trio finally began enforced production of a Ministry-commissioned documentary—*Land of Mussolini's Birth*. Conceived in a surrealist manner, one scene depicted a woman shrouded in black wandering through Mussolini's birthplace, carrying a scythe. This affinity caused the senile Il Duce no end of fear. Feeling that the symbol signified bad luck, he destroyed all copies and prohibited similar film adventures. These clashes finally led the Emmers to exile in Switzerland. Gras was subsequently forced into the Army and after the Armistice interned in a German concentration camp, where he languished until released by American forces.

After the liberation the reunited trio extended their experiments into the realm of painting, turning for



material to the medieval fresco masterpieces of Giotto and Bosch. Both painters possessed qualities of progressive story-telling in their multi-sectioned frescoes, and attempted to render motion to the inanimate characters within the physical bounds of their medium. These tendencies were better suited to cinematic expression. A year of preparation culminated in a fifteen-minute film, *Racconto Da Un Affresco* (The Story of a Mural), taken from thirty-seven wall frescoes by Giotto (1267-1337) in the Chapel of Scrovengi, in Padova, depicting three of the most dramatic and human episodes in the life of Christ: his flight to Egypt as a child to escape the slaughter of the innocents; the raising of his dearest friend Lazarus from the dead; and the betrayal by Judas, leading to Christ's death on the Cross.

DIFFERENT APPROACH

Emmer endeavoured to capture the theme of the Christ story, preserving the essential medieval style, static quality and spirit, through expression in cinematic form. His approach differed radically from that of predecessor experimentalists. He avoided previous pitfalls of attempting to reproduce a painting in its visual entirety by a simple process of camera recording. To Emmer this constituted an ignoble use of the medium. Instead, he transposed only the thematic entirety of the original paintings, subjecting it to re-creation and re-interpretation through the techniques and laws peculiar to cinematography. Breaking down the frescoes thematically, he analyzed and culled each section for the plastic elements that would most eloquently express the strongest values of story content. This isolation of parts from the whole purposely disturbed the equilibrium of the original paintings in order to form a new cinematic equilibrium. Through logical shot juxtaposition, this selection of images, having no meaning or balance in themselves, fused into a dynamic integral visual relationship. Enhanced by sensitive manipulation of camera positions, deft angles of approach, subtle lighting,

sound, and constructive editing and shot rhythm, the story continuity flowed lucidly with imagination and mounting tension, rising to the ultimate dramatic climax.

Above you see one of Giotto's frescoes and a partial shot-by-shot analysis of how it appears in cinematic reconstruction. The scene, the kissing of Christ, opens with a long shot of the fresco, establishing the site of action. Then Emmer cuts into the picture with a medium shot that pulls out an isolated fragment: a robed man pointing to Judas about to kiss Christ. This is followed by a close-up reaction shot of a soldier in the procession; two close-ups of others in the crowd; a close-up study of Judas taken from a different fresco, emphasizing the profile and theme of evil in his eyes at the moment the Gospel words are spoken: "Judas, with one kiss you betray the son of man". Cut to reaction close-up of Christ and part of soldier behind him, breathing menace; then the dramatic close-up of the kiss itself, with the eyes of the two men meeting; and the final cut, from still a later fresco, of Christ's hands bound, which binds the cinematic relationship as well, ending with the Gospel words: "You come to take me with swords and sticks, as though I were a thief".

In the final scene, the mourning of Christ, Emmer selects five progressive phases of angles in motion from different Giotto frescoes. When viewed in rapid succession, one dissolving into another, they create the cinematic illusion of an angel in continuous flight.

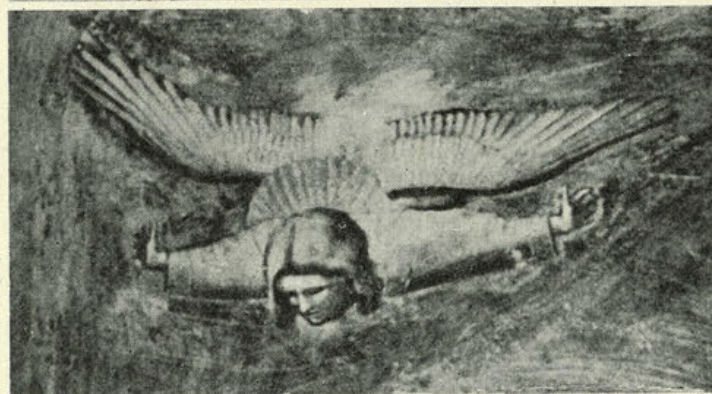
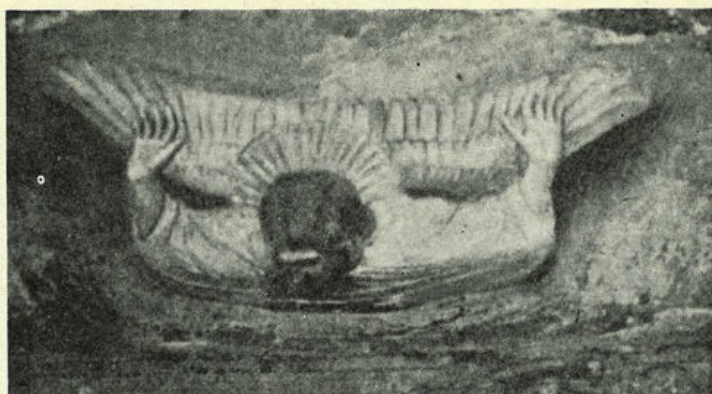
The over-all results are quite amazing. The thematic meaning of the series of frescoes is successfully recreated in filmic time and space, although we have never once seen a hint of their physical totality. An illusory spell engenders a quality of life and breadth to the historical period. The preserved medieval spirit is vivified through cinematic movement of the inanimate subjects and transcends the screen with tremendously sustained emotional impact.

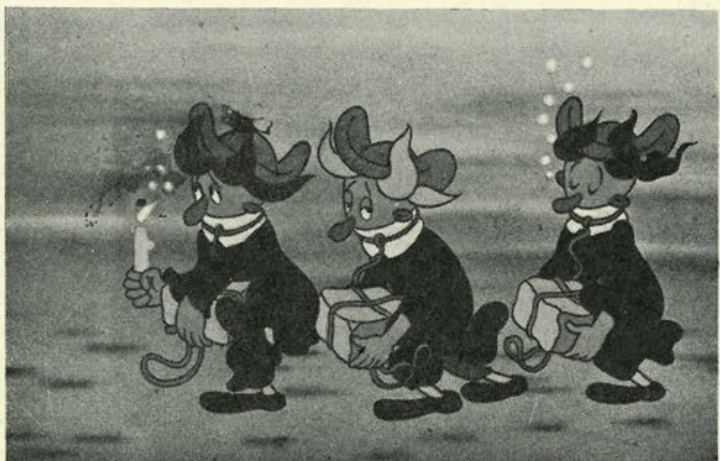
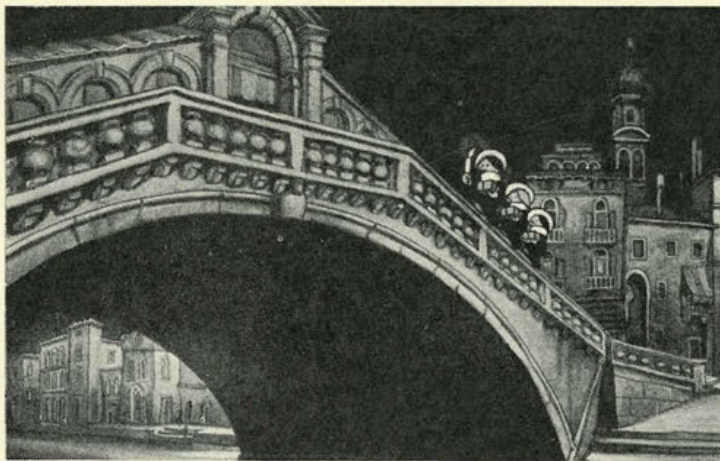
Paradise Terrestre, the story of Adam and Eve's banishment from Paradise as conceived in twenty-seven frescoes by Hieronymous Bosch (1450-1516) is also quite remarkable.

The film deals with Adam and Eve's wanderings through the wondrous Garden of Eden; the temptation of the serpent and the first sin; and their final casting-out from Paradise. It swarms with people and strange, unbelievable creatures all moving about in a magical, fantastic world. Bosch, with his amazing abilities as animal-animator and surrealist, was the medieval forerunner of Disney and Dali. The episode of Eve's temptation and downfall stands out especially as a memorable experience. The scene fades in on a huge close-up of the tail-end of a snake. Slowly the camera pans up its body to rest for a moment on leering, vicious eyes. Then it dissolves to a medium shot of a whole apple. This is followed by a cut to a close-up of eyes again, which are revealed to be those of Eve, and her body comes into full view. Cut back to a close-up of the snake's eyes; Eve's eyes; medium shot of an apple; full shot of Eve's hand extended, close-up of snake's eyes, medium shot of apple, medium shot of Eve's hand extended further, close-ups of her fingers reaching forward, serpent's eyes, Eve's eyes—then, in a thunderous succession, close-ups of Eve's eyes from various angles, taken from different sections of the frescoes—to portray her growing fascination for the forbidden apple. These build in speed and tempo to create a startling, hypnotic, dramatic effect, culminating with a long final shot—a close-up of a half-eaten apple.

Future productions in color will include *The Ballet of Spring* from the charming "spring" paintings of Botticelli (1444-1510) which will be edited to the rhythm of the music that inspired them, a ballad written by Poliziano, Botticelli's best friend and close advisor, and *The Surprising Twin Brothers*, to be adopted from the paintings of B. Angelico (1387-1455) which deals with the fantastic adventures of the twins, Cosa and Damiano, who received from God a gift of knowledge which enabled them to heal all ills, and were later punished for their accomplishments by the tyrant Diocletian in the year 280.

Limited facilities and lack of adequate funds are responsible for minor technical weaknesses in some of Emmer's earlier works, including imperfect coordination, at times, between the visual image and the home-recorded sound track. (The background music ranges from Prokofieff to Ravel, Bach to Stravinsky, Beethoven to Souza.) Some foreign art critics have lamented the decomposition of the paintings, while film purists have also criticized the application of film movement to essentially static objects. Notwithstanding disputable questions of aesthetics, it cannot be denied that these films serve a rich educational as well as entertainment purpose in bringing before the public heretofore inaccessible art, enhanced by cinematic treatment. The trio have already envisioned the vast opportunities for ramifications. They plan to produce twenty-four such shorts a year, in color. Arrangements are now being completed for a world-wide distribution of the film in 16 mm. and 35 mm. for school and museum consumption. Entertainment values are attested to by the successful audience response in Italy, Paris, London, Warsaw, Prague, and at the Basle Film Congress. It is hoped that this warm approval will be supplemented at the American premiere some time this spring. Luciano Emmer and his associates have rekindled the spirit of inquiry and exploration in the field of cinema. Their freshness and sincerity, and the complete disregard for the commercial that is reflected in their personalities and work, are happy signs of perhaps greater things to come.





ITALY'S FIRST

By HUGH

ONE DAY LAST SUMMER four taxis drew up at a house in North London carrying two gentlemen of Milan and eight large wooden crates. The house was the headquarters of British Tri-Colour Processes, Ltd., and the boxes contained the drawings of the first Italian sound cartoon film.

I had "discovered" the studio where this film was made when I was in Milan in 1945. There I met 39-year-old Nino Pagot who made it. Originally a newspaper cartoonist and children's story-book illustrator, he had long been fascinated by the idea of making his illustrations live in film cartoon form and was determined to make a full-scale assault on a branch of film production in which no other Italian had yet fully succeeded.

In April, 1944, when Milan was occupied by the Germans he managed to interest a small circle of his friends in his ideas—Renzo Bianchi for musical matters, Ferdinando Palermo for animation—and together, in July, they formed a company which they called A.R.S.-Film with makeshift studios and workshops in Milan and a staff of 70.

This original studio was badly damaged in the R.A.F. raids on Milan and when I saw them they had moved into a fine new building in the Via Pier Lombardo fully equipped technically with up-to-date apparatus and laid out systematically, process by process, in a series of bright, well-lit rooms. Here I saw projected in black and white, with the musical sound-track only, a short film they had just finished called *Sinfonia Magica* (Magic Symphony), built round a pianoforte concerto specially written by Renzo Bianchi and played by a well-known Italian pianist, Carlo Vidusso.

It featured three little figures in pseudo-clerical garb called the Brothers Dynamite (*Fratelli Dinamiti*). The real hero of the film, however, which lasted about eight minutes, was the Pianist, a little, big-headed man with innocent saucer eyes. There was a magnificent scene in which the Lady in the Box in the Concert Hall dropped him a rose, which took root on the lid of his grand piano and grew and grew until it reached the box. The Pianist was literally "carried away" by his passion and by the music, and we saw him getting out of himself, lifted into the air out of his suit of clothes which was left at the piano to wrestle with the mundane part of tapping out the notes, and transported up the stem of the rose into the arms of his lady-love. It was quite first-class—film fantasy at its best.

This short is now part of a much more ambitious, full-length film lasting an hour and a quarter called simply *The Brothers Dynamite*, whose history it tells. This is in five "chapters", each of which is complete in itself and could, if needed, be shown separately as a short.

The story starts with three little boys being shipwrecked on a desert island and growing up Good Savages who compose their own peculiar music. A party of philanthropic old ladies "rescue" them and send them to school to be civilised. A local devil tries to lure them to his castle, but

SOUND CARTOONS

BARTY-KING

they discover that his weakness is a passion for music and that whenever he indulges in it he loses his evil power. There are scenes in a concert hall, in which *Sinfonia Magica* has been incorporated, and the last episode takes place during Carnival at Venice—very colourful and gay this, if one can judge from the drawings—in which the devil is finally laid low.

This full-length cartoon is now complete in black and white (only, as yet), and the sound track has been recorded. The original plan was to have the film made into colour by the German colour process Agfa. Through the Film Section of the Psychological Warfare Branch of A.F.H.Q. in Rome, they were put in touch with Mr. J. H. Coote, who had just set up a pilot plant in North London for his newly patented colour process, which he called "British Tri-colour".

By this time, A.R.S.-Film, which had been operating for two years without a single foot of film having been sold or distributed, was reconstituted and changed its name to Pagot-Film. The new managing director, Dott. Ing. Antonio Negromanti, and one of the new directors, Signor Paolo Gaudenzi, came to London with the complete set of drawings for a short film called *Lalla E Il Funghetto* (Lalla and the Toadstool), and in the basement of a North London mansion British Tri-colour began to make a colour print.

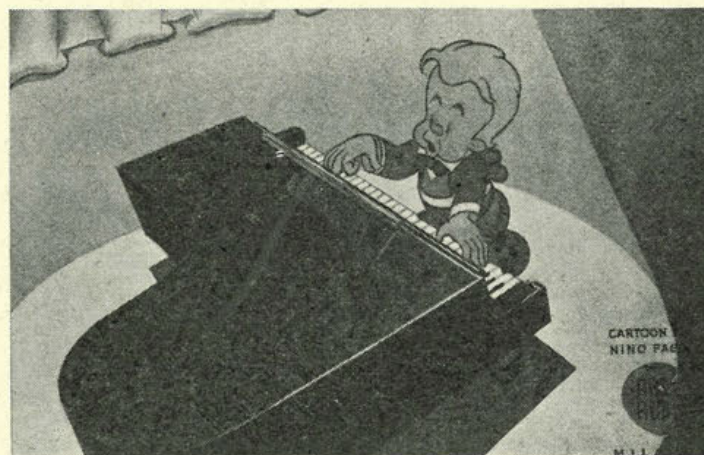
Lalla was just finished before the fuel crisis put British Tri-colour temporarily out of commission. I saw it projected in London at the beginning of March. Technically the film was good and the colour excellent. It was an awkward length, however, for audiences over here—about 15 minutes—and the treatment was at times heavy and unsubtle. But as an example of the sort of work that Pagot can turn out—his fine sense of colour, draughtsmanship and animation—it has lots of promise. The impression one got from seeing *Lalla* was that he could do with an inspired script-writer and ideas-man, but I have an idea that a showing of *The Brothers Dynamite* might make one think otherwise.

Nino Pagot regards these first films more or less as experiments. For him the art of the animated cartoon is only in its infancy. He once told me that he considered it might well become the art of contemporary civilisation.

"The animated drawing", he said, "can translate with complete freedom of expression whatever poetic idea it likes. I believe that a new artistic experiment such as this could lead the people back to *la vera poesia*".

The kind of film he envisaged was one sustained by a single original poetic idea, making up an organic whole, and realised in terms of rhythmical action.

That is Nino Pagot's vision. In the meantime, his dreams are hindered by mundane matters like getting someone to print his pictures in colour and someone else to distribute them. Perhaps by the time this has appeared in print these two obstacles will have been overcome.



THE ITALIAN CINEMA BEFORE THE LIBERATION

By

ARTHUR VESSELO

SO MUCH HAS BEEN said recently of the virtues of *Roma—Città Aperta*, that it is not surprising to find an article in the Winter issue of SIGHT AND SOUND soft-peddalling the film, and suggesting strongly that there may be other Italian films no less worthy of notice. It is a natural reaction to grow tired of repeated praise of one particular work, and it is reasonable also to want to relate the individual item to its more general background. In this case, however, there are good grounds for holding that the truly revealing comparison or contrast is not ultimately between *Roma—Città Aperta* and its latter-day companions, but rather between the whole modern trend which it symbolises and a totally different previous Italian tradition. Even a cursory glance backwards shows the completeness of the severance, and helps to put the new movement in its proper light.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the pre-liberation of Italian cinema is the meagreness of its development in the quarter-century after the beginning of the first World War. The reasons are not obvious. Money cannot have been the most important factor, for in the years after 1918 more than one Continental country established a reputation with only the slenderest of economic resources; while the grandiose efforts of Mussolini at the latter end of the period certainly did not fail for want of cash—nor, for that matter, for want of desire or important backing.

The reasons go much deeper. Fundamentally, they are reasons of the spirit. Under Fascism, there was much talk of Italy as a "young" country, as a new civilisation marching gloriously towards a rosy future; but, in fact, the pull was in entirely the other direction, not towards the future but towards the past. The goal of Fascism was the resurrection of a corpse, the Roman Empire, maps of whose domains were displayed as an incentive in the streets (where, as far as I know, they stand yet, a saddened memorial to ambition overthrown). The cinema of Mussolini reflected this—often directly, through the production of such prodigious and uninspiring historical epics as *Scipione Africano* (complete with elephants), at other times indirectly, as in the depressing modern battle-heroics of *Lo Squadrone Bianco*. These great works never succeeded in attracting the Italian public away from their real preference, American films.

It is inaccurate to think of Fascism as a growth *ex novo*, for the most part it simply exaggerated certain pre-existent tendencies, at the expense of others. The Italian tendency to look back rather than forward is easily understandable, in view of the glories of ancient Rome and the prevalent sense of modern Italian decline (the latter strongly felt, for various reasons, in the present century); and the tendency is clearly enough evident in the pre-1914 Italian cinema, too—in the spectacular reconstructions of *Quo Vadis*, for instance, and *Cabiria*. But in those days, there was some further justification for such an attitude, at least, as far as the cinema was concerned. Films were then still fledglings, still young and weak, still seeking aid

largely from older arts and other ideas; and it was not unnatural that they should try at times to bolster themselves up with the borrowed dignity of a representation of grand, remote, historical events.

TYPICAL FILMS

There is, of course, nothing necessarily wrong in making a film or two about the past; but harping perpetually on the past, or on certain narrowly limited aspects of the past, is another matter. Certainly the Italian cinema is not alone in having failed properly to free itself from these spiritual trammels; but the defect in the Italian instance is very notable.

In 1944, in a private viewing-theatre in Rome, I saw a number of films which I was told were typical of the better Italian productions of the most recent period before Rome fell. They were not an absolutely genuine cross-section, as they came all from one firm, Lux Film; and they included no example of the kind of light drawing-room comedy which, in its unpretentious way, has been one of the most authentic growths of Italian film-development; but in basis, I have no serious reason to doubt their representativeness. They were offered me as typical of the higher ranges; and they were 70 per cent. costume-pieces.

On the score of technical efficiency, there are no great complaints against these films. In fact, their standards of technique and productions are high, much higher than I had expected. There is none of that amateurish quality which the almost total absence of Italian films from British screens for so long might have led one to assume as probable. For all that, the vitality with which they are inspired is vicarious. Their life, in a sense, is not their own.

A glance at the titles and derivations of some of them gives a clue to this. The best made of those I saw, *Un Colpo Di Pistola* (an excellent film of its kind), is from a story of Pushkin, about Russian officers, sincere but temporarily thwarted love and duels. The most ambitious, *I Promessi Sposi*, is a painstakingly faithful and not unimpressive rendering of Manzoni's famous novel about seventeenth-century Lombardy. Among the others are *Malombra*, from Fogazzaro's romantic tragedy of the last century; *Zazà*, based, it would appear, on a French original and again on a romantic tragic tale of the last century, though diverse from *Malombra* in background and material detail; and *Addio Amore!* yet another romantic tragedy of the same period, if on a somewhat lower level and once more based on a novel (or rather on two combined).

Of costume and modern films alike, the one which might with most justification have been imported to Britain was *Un Colpo Di Pistola*: in this respect there is something of a gap between it and the rest. Had it been made a year or two earlier, when the channels of communication were still open, it is possible that it might have been so imported.

Neither this film nor any of the others I have named, though every one of these is a costume-piece, has, it will be noted, anything to do with ancient Rome or the like; and it may be felt at first that the point raises a certain confusion in my argument; but I do not feel that to be really so.

The Italian tendency to dwell in the past explains itself most clearly when it concentrates on such themes as that of ancient Roman grandeur; but it does not need invariably to confine itself in that way. The reconstruction of the more distant past has a number of considerable practical difficulties which may well discourage too many or too frequent attempts, particularly in these days when popular judgment is more critical than it once was; and the diversion therefore of the nostalgic, backward-looking impulse to a nearer past, more easily represented, is a natural development. So viewed, the whole of the past, of all nations, becomes a common field, separated sharply from the problems of an actual to-day, and covered, even under the light of tragedy, in a soft, romantic haze.

There is a kind of period-film which can overcome these defects, which, putting the past in its right historical and human perspective, can make of it not an escape, but a ladder to the present. But if there are any such among the Italian output, I do not know of them. Though *Un Colpo Di Pistola* gave me pleasure, I doubt whether it could be so described.

The films which I have listed are dependent for a great part of their appeal upon the nostalgic impulse to which I have referred. They are dependent also in another way, for it will be seen that, with one possible exception (*Zazà*, whose precise origins I have been unable to trace), they are derivative from literature. Outstanding in this classification is *I Promessi Sposi*. That title, though there may not be more than two or three per cent. of Englishmen who have ever heard of it, is well-known to every Italian school-child: its original is the accepted classic of modern Italian

prose. It was inevitable, one supposes, that a work so highly considered and so profoundly Italian should have been translated to the Italian screen. The film is careful, polished, and of the most meritorious intention: it is also long, and at times a trifle dull. What it conveys of the book is chiefly its surface.

These were the films I saw in 1944 in Rome. In 1945, in Milan, I saw *Roma—Città Aperta*, and the contrast cannot be exaggerated. With this, I felt the Italian cinema had suddenly and tremendously shaken itself free—ridding itself in an instant both of the encumbering fripperies of the fancy-dress piece and the dragging apron-strings of famous literature, and casting off with them a host of other romantic and rhetorical unrealities. More contemporary in its subject-matter, more down-to-earth in its approach, the film could hardly have been; and what derivations it showed were derivations of style, strengthening rather than weakening, from the best of the French and the Soviet cinema.

I still believe this film to be outstanding in the annals not merely of the Italian cinema but of the cinema of the world. If it is no longer alone, that is good proof of how well it did its work: What it will eventually lead to is perhaps another matter, now that the relatively clear-cut issues of which it treated have given place to a confusion of post-war troubles, with right and wrong often almost indistinguishable from one another. It is impossible to ignore the influence of subject-matter on this kind of film, and where the issues dealt with are at once pressing and confused, the results run great risk of being either indeterminate or violent, or both. The fact remains that the Italian cinema, since the making of the film in question, gives every sign of having been set firmly upon a new road, and its destination from now on is of interest not only to Italians.

ANAGRAM

BOOK REVIEW By J. M. SMITHELLS

THE AMERICANS, AS ONE would expect from one of the greatest scientific nations in the world, have a peculiar mania for dissecting and analysing everything, breaking down even the most abstract ideas into their separate components. Even art is not immune, and the film, which, in spite of Hollywood's attempts, is one of our most important art forms, has come in for its fair share of this dissection. Books by directors, stars, technicians and call-boys flood the market. And it is refreshing to find a serious book by a serious person detailing her approach to film making, not only as a professional craftsman, but as a person with a broad cultural background. In photography, reality passes through the lens to be recorded immediately on the film, and a photograph will often be taken as proof of "truth" when a painting or verbal testimony fails to carry weight. The photographer is the intermediary between the facts as they are and the final result as portrayed on the screen. And it is this intermediary who decrees what artistic merit, if any, the film will have.

In her essay¹ Miss Maya Deren is, rightly, I think, concerned more with the philosophical and cultural ideas

underlying the film producers' attitude to his production than with the mechanics of the film. She deplores the idea, only too common in this country, that the documentary is the supreme achievement of the film, and, therefore, by implication, in the category of an art form. The real value of the documentary is the "objective, impartial rendition of an otherwise obscure or remote fact", and, since a work of art first and foremost is concerned with the creation of an idea, the documentary cannot do both. Reality, or the illusion of reality, are both the same to the audience, but whether the film (as produced by Hollywood) has ever implanted an idea in anyone's head, is a debatable point.

Maya Deren has much to say about the successes and failures of the documentary, and some of her ideas are extremely interesting and contentious. She is the first person whom I have come across intimately connected with the production of films, who has doubts as to whether photography will ever be able to convey verbal images successfully. She says, "I would go so far as to say that only that literature which fails to make creative use of its verbal instrument could be made into a good film". This essay should be read not only by those engaged in making films but by those whose work it is to educate the public into the importance of the film as a medium of knowledge.

¹ "An Anagram of Ideas on Art, Form and Film", by Maya Deren. New York, The Alicant Book Shop Press, 1946.

CUBAN CINEMA

By

RAMOND DEL CASTILLO

OF ALL THE Latin American countries possessing film industries (and to them must now be added Peru, with a studio recently erected at Chosica) none have such a filmic adaptability as the culture and tradition of Cuba, where the culture of Spain has fused and intermingled with that of the African negro, producing such manifestations of its vitality as the Afro-Cuban rhythms of the dance. There is room here for the development of a school of cinema not falling into any strictly definable category, but completely individual, though there are as yet no indications of the formation of such a school.

That the Cuban Government is aware of the possibilities in a Cuban film industry has been demonstrated many times; most recently with the erection in 1946 of a £25,000 studio at Cataranna sponsored by the government. These studios, small but modern, consist of two sound stages, laboratory, cafeteria, cutting-rooms and offices, with constructional work under the supervision of Manuel Alonso, a prominent independent producer and head of a local newsreel.

This is the most constructive move made by the government in their frequent attempts to found a stable film industry in the country, beginning in 1936 when a Bill was introduced into the Senate creating a National Motion Picture Board, under the supervision of a Motion Picture Academy, to provide financial assistance for any Cuban national or company attempting to produce films. The same year two companies began to make short advertising films and, later, occasional feature films of pretty poor quality, automatically restricting their distribution to the Caribbean island.

In 1939 a veteran Cuban director, Ramon Peon, who had made silent films in Havana as early as 1920 as a prelude to six years in Hollywood directing Spanish versions for Twentieth Century-Fox, returned to make two feature films before going to Mexico, where his greatest achievement has been to complete 10 films in 126 days of continuous production.

During the next few years an isolated feature was produced every now and again without causing much excitement. Then, in the middle of 1945, Manuel Alonso announced he would produce twelve films in Havana for Mexican producers. Nothing came of this plan, but it did emphasise that any attempt to establish the local industry on a sound footing would have to come from local producers who must not rely too much on assistance from Mexico. The upshot of this realisation was a fairly steady volume of production during 1946.

Fantasmas del Caribe, directed by Ernesto Caparros, and *Sed de Amor*, directed by Betancourt Valdez, were poor in the extreme, but *Embrujo Antillano* was a commercial success, receiving wide distribution in Latin America. The producer, Octavio Gomez Castro, spent £15,000 on the latter film, bringing two stars over from Mexico City, Maria Antonieta Pons, a rhumba dancer, and Ramon

Armengod, to appear with Blanquita Amaro and Federico Piñero under the direction of Geza Polaty. This film, despite its cost, was little better than its less ambitious predecessors.

COMPETENT BUT UNINSPIRED

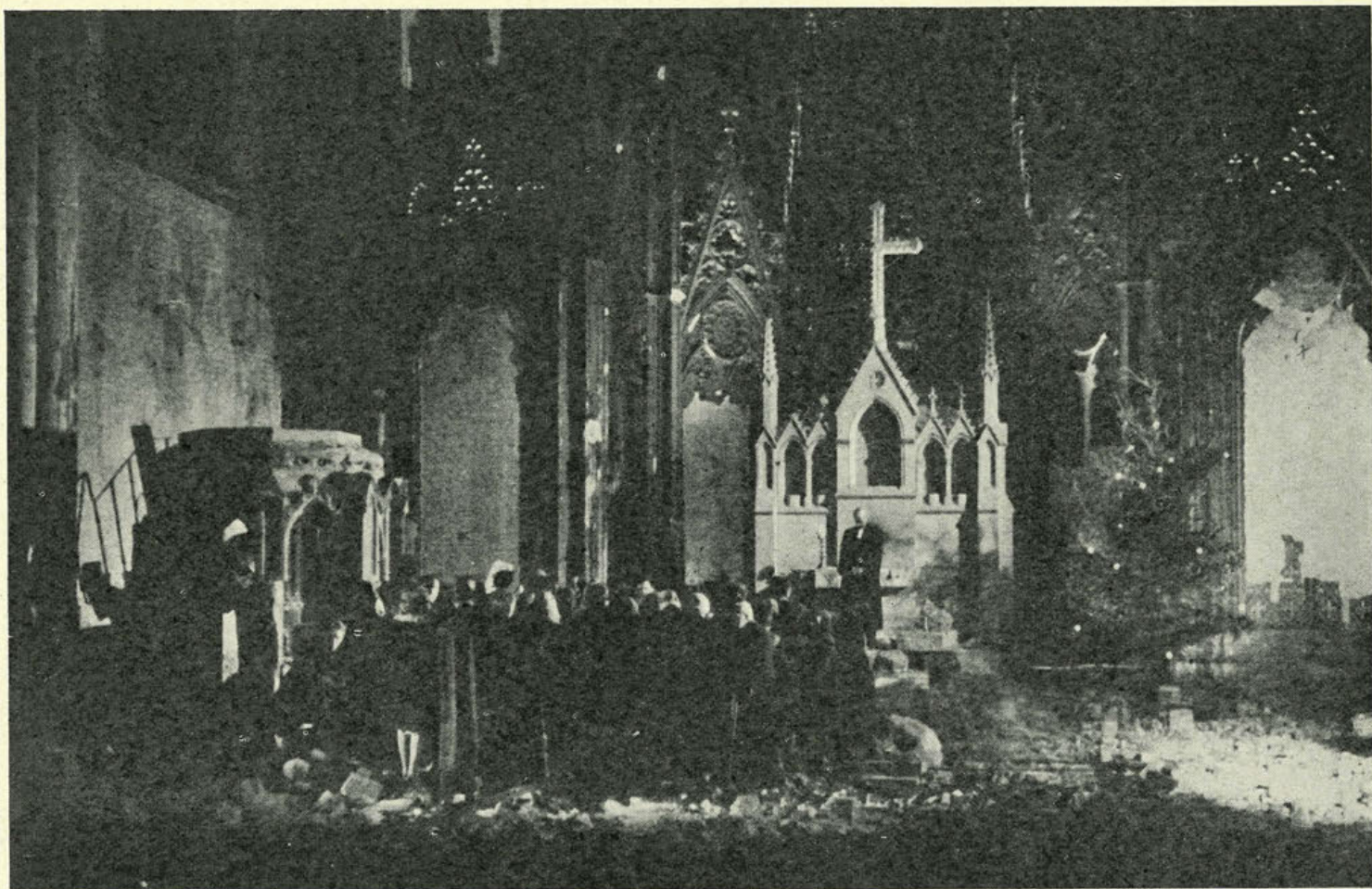
The two most important films yet produced in Cuba have now been completed but neither have yet been exhibited, but as both of them have been made with players and technicians from either Buenos Ayres or Mexico City they can hardly be considered as a fair test of the possibilities of the Cuban film industry. The most publicized is *Comu Tu, Ninguna*, directed by Roberto Ratti, who began as a script-writer in Buenos Ayres before becoming a director in Argentina and Mexico. The cast consists of competent, if uninspired, performers, known to the general public in Latin America through performances in Mexican films, José Cibrián and Anna Maria Lynch, supported by two Cuban players, America Imperio and Otto Sirgo, the latter well known on the dramatic stage.

Although the second film is less ambitious than *Comu Tu, Ninguna* it may well turn out to be of superior merit—a musical, and there is a rich store of Cuban music containing both popular appeal and expressing something of the mixed musical heritage in the weird beat of its rhythms. Whether the Argentinian director, Leo Fleider, will turn out a musical film away from the conventional pattern remains to be seen, but there is room for a Latin American musical escaping from the stupidity of the usual *Thrill of Brazil* type of nonsense. The stars, Augustin Irusta, Charito Granados and Enrique Herrera, ably fulfil their function of providing “star” names familiar to Latin American film-goers.

Production has now started on *La Esclava*, with Maria Antoneita Pons, under the direction of Tomas Julia. Miss Pons is a remarkably gifted dancer who has usually been cast in musical films in comparison with which the average American musical is a miracle of intelligence.

Cuban producers will always have to fight the domination of Mexican companies who, when a director or player shows any sign of ability, immediately cable contract offers.

The American companies control the exhibition side, but British films are breaking long-run records, while French films are being exhibited in increasing numbers, but the most popular box-office stars are probably “Cantinflas”, the Mexican comedian who was to have made a film for R.K.O. in Hollywood until he saw a copy of the script revised by the studio, upon which he returned to Mexico in a hurry, and Nini Marshall, an Argentinian comedienne on Mrs. Malaprop lines who was banned from the Argentine radio because of her satire on military manners and who is shortly to fulfil a long contract in Havana.



Die Morder Sind Unter Uns

D.E.F.A.

THE REVIVAL OF THE GERMAN FILM

By

H. H. WOLLENBERG

FOR A PERIOD OF twelve years, the film with its immense suggestive power and its unique emotional appeal had systematically been used by the Nazis as the most effective psychological instrument for the destruction of moral values and for the corruption of the German mind. Both history and contemporary events, as well as social and human problems, had been distorted to serve the Nazi purposes and to propagate their creed through lies projected on the German screens. When, in 1945, Nazi Germany collapsed, the German film industry collapsed with it.

However, as early as in the spring of 1946, the first signs of a revival of the German film became apparent. The Allied occupation authorities apparently realised the importance of German film production as a means of moral reconstruction, which is, in fact, no less an urgent problem than physical and economic rehabilitation.

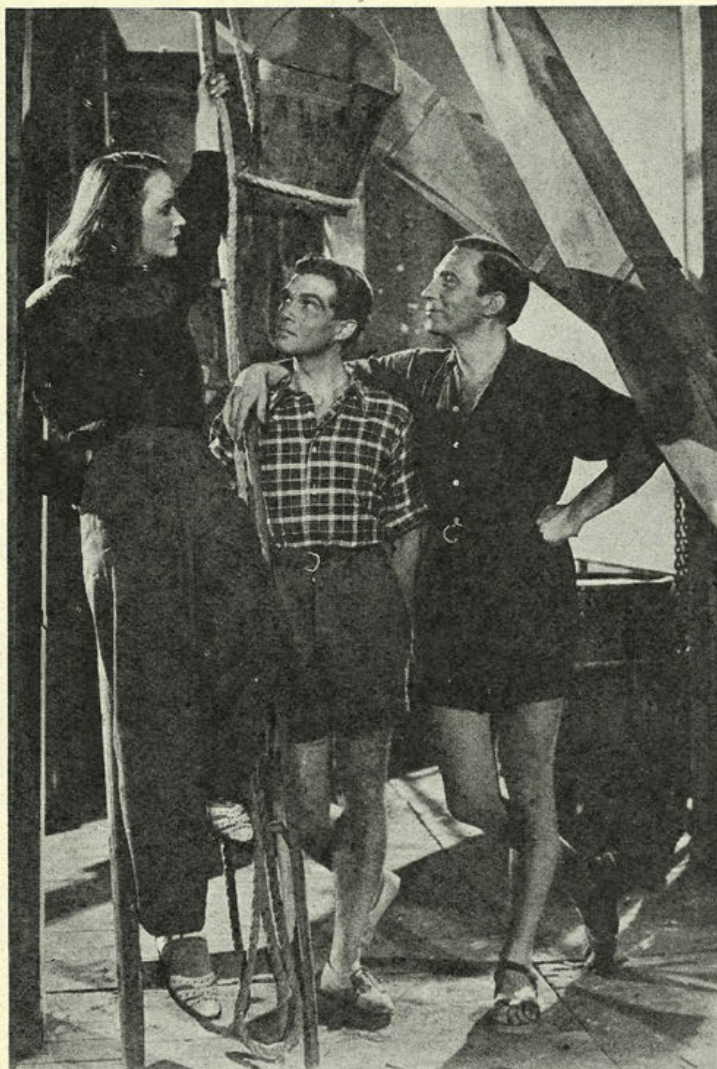
It was in May, 1946, that, inaugurated by a function in the former U.F.A. studios at Neubabelsberg, near Berlin, the newly-formed D.E.F.A. film company was presented with a production licence by the Russian authorities. A schedule of ten feature films was put into operation, apart

from a programme of newsreels, interest and instructional shorts.

The next to follow suit were the British, who first licensed a German unit named "Studio 45" in Berlin, and later in the year the "C.C.C." (Central Cinema Company). Outside Berlin, British production licences have been given to Helmut Käutner ("Camera Film"), one of the most promising directors and Walter Koppel ("Real Film"), both in Hamburg.

In the meanwhile, the first films made under British and Soviet licences have already been completed and, therefore, afford an opportunity to assess general trends in the new German production.

By far the biggest film undertaking is D.E.F.A., which stands for Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft (German Film Company, Ltd.). Administrative offices are in the former U.F.A. building in the centre of Berlin, which is situated in the Russian sector, and the firm has already expanded to such an extent that it now employs 1,300 people approximately. Its activities are favoured by the fact that two of the largest studios, which can still be used, namely, Neubabelsberg and Johannestal, are both just outside Berlin in the



Birds of Migration

Studio 45

Russian zone; the same applies to the Agfa film stock plant at Wolfen.

The D.E.F.A. pictures so far shown in public indicate a production policy under which stories are set in a contemporary German background and related to problems of contemporary German life. The first of them was *The Murderers are Amongst Us*, which was given a gala premiere in the Berlin State Opera. It has since been shown in Switzerland and Austria, too. This first German post-war film portrays a German, posing as a harmless citizen, an exemplary family man and employer who, only a few years ago, as an army captain, did not hesitate to wipe out a whole Polish village. His opposite number is a young German doctor who was with him at the time and who was deeply affected by those experiences. Both parts are convincingly performed, but the great new discovery is the film's leading lady, Hildegard Knef. She is now an outstanding actress of both the Berlin stage and cinema. Best use is made of the ruins of Berlin, which give the film an authentic background. A Christmas service held in a destroyed church is particularly impressive. Although rather slow in parts, the film's young director, Wolfgang Staudte, shows considerable talent. The story is based on an idea of his own.

With another D.E.F.A. film, entitled *Somewhere in Berlin*, we meet an old acquaintance in its director, Gerhard Lamprecht, who is best remembered for his *Emil and the Detectives*. Again in this film, a story of a soldier coming home to his family, Lamprecht shows his talent for directing children. The leading part is taken by eleven-year-old Charles Knetschke, as the son of the soldier, who was discovered by Lamprecht in a tramcar. Harry Hindemith plays the soldier, Hedda Sarnow his wife; Fritz Rasp, Paul Bildt, Magdalene von Nussbaum and Walter Bluhm add other convincing portrayals.

Free Land, the third D.E.F.A. film, is a film with a distinct documentary flavour. Director Milo Harbig, who also wrote the script, here deals with the land reform as carried out in the Russian zone. An aristocratic landowner has fled and his considerable estate is divided up between refugees and new settlers. Farmhands, small peasants and factory workers are allotted small holdings and some cattle, though tools are still very scarce. They overcome their difficulties by a co-operative effort. Ursula Voss plays the female lead with Fritz Wagner, who shows great promise as her partner.

These are the D.E.F.A. productions so far shown, and we find that in these as well as in the pictures now in various stages of production a considerable number of new and unknown talent is employed.

A very topical subject, the battle of the Berlin police against the black market, is the theme of yet another D.E.F.A. film which is nearing completion. Under the title *Round-Up (Razzia)*, it promises to be an up-to-date crime-thriller, directed by another newcomer, Werner Klingler. The cast includes established German actors such as Gerhard Bienert and Leibelt, and newcomers Harry Frank and Heinz Welzel, and a Greek-born chansonnète, Nina Konsta, who is greatly admired on the Berlin stage.

Another contemporary subject just being filmed is *Kolonne Strupp*, which deals with the work of the employees of the Berlin tram and underground service immediately after the capitulation.

Whereas these films are characterised by their endeavour to be authentic and topical, a change of policy is indicated in an interview Berlin correspondent Paul Ickes had with the head of the D.E.F.A. scenario department, Dr. G. Klaren. He explained that for the time being, this type of film has been abandoned. The next subject, which is scheduled to start on the floor at the end of March, will constitute a return of the surrealist German tradition of films like F. W. Murnau's *Faust* or *The Student of Prague*. The first film in this line will be a screen adaptation of Georg Büchner's famous tragedy of the early 19th century "Wozzek". It tells the story of a soldier, a weakling, who would stand any degradation in order to obey his superiors, and eventually commits suicide. Dr. Klaren pointed out that the script combines real action with the fantasies of the soldier, and even introduces Büchner himself. It obviously seems an ambitious and interesting experiment, not without its deeper meaning for the German public.

However, a number of entertainment films are also on the D.E.F.A. schedule. They will include a musical comedy based on Offenbach's "La Belle Hélène", a circus subject "Allez Opp" and a love story based on Kurt Tucholsky's charming novel "Rheinsberg".

While D.E.F.A. is believed to have considerable financial backing from the Russian authorities, the British licensed producers have to stand on their own feet financially. British policy appears to encourage small individual production units as distinct from the big D.E.F.A. set-up.

It was a small group of courageous men, led by the film author Ernst Hasselbach, who formed the "Studio 45" immediately after the collapse in 1945. When the British occupation authorities decided it was time to encourage German production in the British sector of Berlin, they turned to this unit and granted them a production licence which was handed over in July, 1946, at a small ceremony. Herr Hasselbach, during a conversation with Paul Ickes, gave a vivid description of the difficulties which had to be overcome in launching "Studio 45". Shooting has to be done mainly at night in view of the frequent electricity cuts. The artists and technicians are thus confronted with a very strenuous task, but all have responded extremely well and have no other desire but to work in films again. The principal consideration in choosing a story is the lack of material for sets and costumes, and the final selection of subjects is largely determined by these conditions. The technical studio equipment, however, is more or less adequate. The first production schedule included only two films, both of which have now been completed.

PRODUCTIONS

The first film is *Zugvögel* ("Birds of Migration") and it is an outdoor picture set in Western Germany. This again deals with a contemporary problem. Its story is concerned with young Germans who became homeless after the Nazi collapse and who now, like birds of migration, wander through the country trying to settle down. Four young ex-soldiers and three girls are thrown together for a short while. The two leading characters are played by Carl Raddatz, who commits suicide because he only has a few more weeks to live, and Lotte Koch as the girl who falls in love with him. A supporting part is played by Fritz Wagner. The film, sincere in its presentation, is distinguished by its poetical and human atmosphere.

A totally different type is the comedy *Sag die Wahrheit* ("Tell the Truth"), in which Studio 45 brought the well-known actor, Gustav Fröhlich back to the screen. His partners are Ingeborg Kusserow and Mady Rahl. Apart from its brilliant cast, the decor and sets of the film are far more lavish than in the average German production of to-day. The story is about a man who wants to convince his future wife that it is possible to speak nothing but the truth for 24 hours. Instead, he realises that this is not always possible.

Studio 45 is making headway. For the next season a more extensive programme of five films is planned, the first of which is already in preparation.

The second Berlin company working under British licence, C.C.C., has recently gone on the floor with its first production, *King of Hearts* ("Herzkönig"). The producer is Arthur Brauner. It is a story in the traditional German operetta style set in a Ruritania, and in which such comedians as Aribert Wäscher and Wilhelm Bendow make their comeback. Further films on the schedule of C.C.C. are *So War Es* ("So It Was"), which will be shot mainly on location, and a musical which, in view of the

shortage of studio space, is to be shot entirely in a villa in the west end of Berlin—an interesting undertaking anyway.

Our survey of present German production has been directed by the purpose of providing an analytical description rather than criticism. We find that this is possible only in respect of British and Russian licensed films at the present stage. Films made under American licence are not yet available. The Americans, last year, put Eric Pommer, once one of the foremost German film producers and now an American citizen, in charge of film activities within their sphere, a move which seemed to indicate considerable projects for the future. But it was only this year that the first thirteen production licences were granted to German producers, whose work will be centred partly in Munich at the Geiselgasteig Studios, partly at the Tempelhof Studios in Berlin. According to Washington reports lately published in U.S. film papers, their policy in Germany seems to be under reconsideration. On the strength of these reports, criticism of a too-ambitious policy under which a strong German industry would be fostered, has been voiced by the American film industry, who look upon Germany, in the first place, as a big potential market for American films. This attitude may soon have its repercussions in the American set-up in Germany. At the same time, our attention is hereby drawn to Germany as a film market, present and future.

MARKET PROSPECTS

Ever since 1918, Germany has been the most substantial market for films on the European continent. There were roughly 5,000 theatres (30 seats per 100 inhabitants) when Hitler took over in 1933. This number increased to 7,000 approximately, not including the annexed territories, during the war. Film attendances rose from 250 million in 1933, to more than 1,000 million in 1942, as a result of the systematic drive on the part of the Nazi government.

To-day, after the devastation and two years of reconstruction, the total of commercial cinemas in the Reich territory can safely be estimated at between 3,000 and 3,500.

However, under the present zonal system, the German market cannot be considered as an entity.

In the British zone, according to the latest figures given, there are now 1,007 cinemas. The latest figure available for the American zone was about 700. The cinemas in the Russian zone are estimated to be about 1,400.

If Germany, as far as films are concerned, were an economic unit, which she is not, she would present a reasonable basis for both the exploitation of German-made and imported films.

The British and American zones together, taken as an economic whole with interchange of films, nonetheless represent a market which can well compare with a number of other countries also having their own profitable film production. The public interest in cinema entertainment in Germany to-day is generally reported as strong. The development of the cinema in Germany should largely depend on the general return to normal conditions in German life. And this, in its turn, is bound to decisively influence developments and prospects for the new German film effort.

CEYLON AND THE CINEMA

By

TARZIE VITTACHI

A STUDY OF THE recent history of entertainment in Ceylon reveals a peculiar variety of "combined development". The range of possible public entertainment is strictly limited. The University produces one serious play a year—it has played Shaw, O'Casey, O'Neill and Shakespeare. Two or three troupes of highly commercialized "strolling" players tour the small towns with hasty messes served as national culture or social satire. The hero is usually a young man with hair brushed back and well vaselined; the heroine is the coy wench whose ignorance is her innocence; the theme is usually the arranged marriage. There is no positive attitude towards social matters like this; the arranged marriage is merely an excuse behind which the hero can sing his 17 new songs. The marriage broker (the stock villain of the business) hatches his naively devilish plots, and the comedian is usually a village cretin or a pert household servant. A sample of a newspaper advertisement:

700 new songs. All sung by Romulus de Silva.

or

40 new actors and actresses. None with stage fright.

or

See 4 years old Baby Swarnalatha and her childish acting.

This is the length and breadth of the drama in Ceylon. One or two attempts have been made to give it a leg-up, but they were too half-hearted to be serious.

There are no popular floor-shows; no regular theatre; an opera company comes past Colombo once in ten years; an occasional world artist—John Gielgud, a magician—Carter the Great—drifts in and leaves his audience more frustrated than before; ballet is taught in one or two schools—but is usually treated as an accomplishment for a young lady which ceases as soon as her legs disappear beneath a saree on the way to marriage and kingdom come.

Concurrent to this is the powerful organization of the local tentacle of Hollywood. The entire business is semi-monopolistic. Ceylon's consumption is often only a couple of months behind Hollywood's output. The Hollywood film gained ground despite the tremendous washback of a moribund but diametrically opposed way of life, a completely unsympathetic morality—a background of Buddhist tranquillity and an atavistic nostalgia for the days before the Europeans came to Ceylon. Parallel to this there is another powerful influence—the Hindi and Tamil films imported from India. The Indian film is far more popular among the Tamils and the working class Sinhalese. One show—*Chintamani*—ran for a year at one cinema. This is because despite its comparative technical crudity, the language, the characters, the clothes and the events in the Indian film find more sympathy among a class of people who have by choice or by necessity escaped the uncritical acceptance of everything that is Western.

The reasons for this ill-defined development of entertainment in Ceylon lie in her economic and educational history. From the warp and woof of deliberate legislation and casual individual activity the familiar patterns of a privileged ruling minority and a vast ill-organized and illiterate majority have been produced. On this contradiction the rest is built. The powerful credit system built around the Port of Colombo, rural malnutrition, highly efficient tea and rubber industries sensitive to the slightest deflection of a needle in London, insanitary "labour lines", universal franchise, feudal political bosses, desperate ignorance, island-wide free education (1946) and a miserable dearth of teachers—all these exist side by side.

LAST BASTION

From this confusion a complex of indefinite, often contradictory, values has sprung. Added to this, there is a growing political self-consciousness, influenced primarily by the rise of national self-consciousness in India and later, by the spread of Marxism in Ceylon. We have a picture of a small island fed literally and metaphorically through the port of Colombo, swaddled and cramped economically and culturally in the vast net of foreign finance capitalism struggling to express itself. This economic and political insignificance has produced a naive and often ridiculous national inferiority. For instance, when the Japanese raided Colombo in 1942 and caused tremendous damage, the newspapers bragged in banner headlines that Ceylon was now the "Last Bastion of The British Empire". The note of satisfaction at being taken notice of was unmistakable!

One of the results of this complexity is an absence of informed criticism even among the minor fraction of the literate and articulate class. The cinema-going public which is growing daily in number has not yet achieved clarity and critical values. There are broadly four levels of appreciation: (1) There is the adolescent who prefers the gun-totin', hard-shootin', rough-ridin' gunman with a wáy with his molls. His values at least are clear cut. His morality is that of Henty, Marryat and P. C. Wren. He cut his first literary teeth on "The Gem", "The Magnet" and "The Champion".

Fair play, square dealing, hitting below the belt, milk-soppiness, the done thing, summary poetic justice are all clear issues to him. The working class public, too, prefers this type of film because (a) they provide an easy visual-emotional appeal. The majesty of the prairie and the gaunt old canyon, the slickness of the night-club with its well-groomed men and beautiful women are directly satisfying to the adolescent and the miserable. The difficulty about language is minimised. The tough film makes little use of

language to get its business across. A "pile-driving punch on the point of the chin", a "vice-like" grip, the rakish slant of a sombrero or a soft hat, the dead man on the carpet, the screech of skidding tyres, the hot baby and the girl I left behind me speak a basic language that is far more expressive than American-English spoken through the side of the mouth, and is known from Peru through Persia to Peking.

WESTERN BACTERIA

The second level of appreciation is that of the man and woman who have lost their power to enjoy the "tough" show and even disapprove of it. Their approach to a film is superficial and emotional. This is in Ceylon, as in the rest of the world, the majority of the cinema public. Films like *Lost Horizon*, *Blossoms in the Dust*, *Going my Way* with their fake idealism, *Random Harvest* and *Mrs. Miniver* with their maudlin sentiment, score heavily with them. The nearest they come to making a critical remark is "good acting". A good actor is one who smirks and gesticulates, moves his eyebrows up or down and otherwise registers various hues of emotion in a marked manner. Spencer Tracy, Edward G. Robinson, Greer Garson—the soul of pathos and loveliness—Humphrey Bogart, James Mason, Joan Crawford, Basil Rathbone are "good" actors. If Tracy ceased to corrugate his brow, Garson appeared less soulful and evanescent, Mason smiled, Bogart wasn't bitter, Crawford toned down her eyebrow work and Rathbone was less crisp and sarcastic they would cease to be attractive. Any attempt at critical valuation, which by necessity often means critical denunciation, would be regarded as hyper-cynicism and the result of a lack of the basic emotions of humanity.

There is on this level another attitude which, if superficial and bigoted is, at least, definite. This is the attitude of the man and woman who look upon the West as the breeding ground of the moral bacteria which, to their alarm, is corrupting the fine, ancient, high-toned way of life in Ceylon. They regard the growing political self-consciousness of the masses, the woman's bicycle and the cinema as symptoms of chaos and degeneration. These are extracts from the "Ceylon Daily News".

SIR,

It was indeed with great regret I noticed in the film *Mildred Pierce* shown at one of our local theatres, the incident of a daughter slapping her mother very vividly displayed. To our Eastern outlook, this is most revolting and scandalous—in fact, unheard of. When our modern girls witness such scenes, they may consider that they are acts of civilized nations and not the heinous crimes which we consider such acts to be.

SIR,

Although I heartily endorse (Mr. —)'s reactions on the influence of certain incidents in this picture on our young people, I would go further and assert that the modern cinema with its gangsters and lewd and demoralising films has contributed in a large measure to the serious crime wave now sweeping this Island. . . . I would also be very much interested to know what part crime episodes, bathroom scenes (not to mention bedroom scenes) and flimsy clothes as shown in the cinemas, play in instilling a much-needed sense of civic and social responsibility into us.

The cinema, like any other art, has a group of devotees who are not bothered enough to develop an original critical attitude towards it but need the intellectual support of a hack-review or a blurb to make a judgment. When they saw a

"difficult" film like Odet's *None but the Lonely Heart* or Renoir's *The Southerner*, they did not state candidly that the gloom and half-light of the former irritated them or that the drabness of the latter bored them. They were very vague about it. Whatever values they have acquired from their experience lie dormant because their dishonesty closes them in. It is the old story of the Emperor's New Clothes all over again.

In a country in which the percentage of literacy is small, and the number of informed people with intelligent values is minute, it is only rarely that one comes across a serious critic of the film or any other art. Newspaper reviewing seems to be done merely to earn the free press ticket to the shows. Art criticism takes the form of an advertisement for an occasional artist who puts on a solo exhibition. Book reviewing is a non-existent art. Dramatic criticism is a fearful job, as practically the only serious plays staged here by Ceylonese have been produced by the Professor of English at the University and the critics are too timid to tilt at learning.

FILM SOCIETY

The major difficulty is the paucity of good shows on which critics could sharpen their teeth. The entire industry is controlled by three or four "magnates" and the general level of films shown is the crudest. Occasionally, a superior film is imported because there is a popular actor on the bill, or through the merest ignorance. Thus *Grapes of Wrath* was shown because of its impressive cast and after three days played to empty houses, and the *Ox Bow Incident* was hired because it featured Henry Fonda. *The Hairy Ape* was taken for another Tarzan show and booked for a "serial house". During the war, however, the cinema public had the chance of seeing several British films. Noel Coward's *In Which We Serve*, *Brief Encounter*, *Half-way House*, *Song of Ceylon*, the documentaries *World of Plenty*, *Target for To-night*, *Desert Victory* and *Western Approaches* were some of the best films put on in Ceylon. The growing enthusiasm with which these films were greeted reveals an encouraging heightening of the critical responses of the public. A few hundred people at least have ceased to argue that they go to the films for "entertainment" and that any sort of critical analysis is only a liverish pastime. They have begun to realise that there may be different levels of entertainment, that being entertained by a film is not merely the passive business of letting the sights and sounds of the film seep into their senses. But no development is possible unless the best films are made readily available. An effort is being made by the newly-formed Film Society who have put on *Dr. Mabuse*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *The Battleship Potemkin*, *In which We Serve*, *Hellzapopping* and a few other films, many of which no commercial cinema corporation would have thought of importing. The problem is, of course, finance. The cinema is an expensive business and film societies all over the world, I believe, are notoriously impecunious. If it were possible to organise a chain of Societies, good films could be circulated throughout the world at a very moderate cost.

This has been an effort to analyse broadly, the various responses made towards the cinema in Ceylon and to consider the causes of this variety. The cinema must be regarded as one of the most significant features in modern life. We must recognise it as the Elizabethans recognized the vitality of the drama. This will be impossible if one were to regard the cinema as an opiate or as "an expensive dream" (Jack Warner of Warner Brothers). A film, a good film, on the contrary, is meant to keep one very wide awake.

THE CINEMA IN GUAYAQUIL

By

A. W. ATTWOOD

GUAYAQUIL, THE LARGEST CITY in the Republic of Ecuador, with a population of some 218,000, stands two degrees South of the equator. As seaport to a relatively undeveloped country of vast vegetational and climatical changes, it holds both a present and a future commercial importance. In spite of its geographical position it enjoys, for at least eight months of the year, an unexpectedly pleasant climate.

In conformity with the general atmosphere, the cinemas are a curious mixture of the old and the new. For the most part they are old theatres, poorly converted, with all the disadvantages of bad acoustics and impracticable seating. Those that have been built as cinemas are cheaply constructed, with inferior equipment and insufficient exits for a city that has twice suffered bad fires in the last fifty years.

UNEASY COMPROMISE

The odds against intelligent enjoyment are so great that any approach to it is a matter of good fortune rather than good intention. One makes a compromise between sitting too far back for clarity of the sound-track and abandoning the protection of the balcony, thus leaving oneself at the mercy of such missiles as lighted cigarette-ends and expectorations from above. At least, hard, wooden seats become more bearable with the knowledge that there is a better chance of being left alone by the insect world.

In the absence of any form of National Cinema, the Guayaquileño depends for his entertainment on the products of the Mexican, Argentinian and Hollywood studios. British films are so infrequent that it is surprising to find their presence felt at all. Since all the cinemas are under contract to American distributing companies, who please themselves as to what films they send, it is a miracle that any British films filter through the net. At best, a film has first to "go down well" in the States before it will receive consideration.

BRITISH FILMS POPULAR

Until fairly recently, the majority of people were unaware of the existence of a film industry in Britain. *The Seventh Veil* was so popular, however, that a general interest in the British studios has resulted. Even such a poor example as *The Madonna of the Seven Moons*, which followed a few weeks later, was well received. James Mason is as well-known a name as many of the favourite Hollywood stars.

Britain's only contribution to the daily programme is "The British Olympic News", distributed through the Consulate free of charge, which did valuable work for Britain during the war in a field where there was a deplorable lack of propaganda.

A few months ago, Hollywood announced that soon all films leaving their studios bound for Latin-America would be "dubbed". In spite of considerable criticism and public indignation they are refusing to deviate from this policy. The English sound-track is slowly but surely becoming a thing of the past. The earliest examples of the "dubbed" film were so bad that the cinema manager, who once proudly advertised the Spanish sound-track, now hastens to advise the public of the increasingly rare occasions when he is showing a film in its original form.

Such great pains are being taken with lip-synchronization that a disarmingly high standard has been attained. This naturally has won a certain amount of support from all classes, but for the most part even the more illiterate poor, who must surely experience difficulty in reading captions, prefer to hear the real voices of their screen idols.

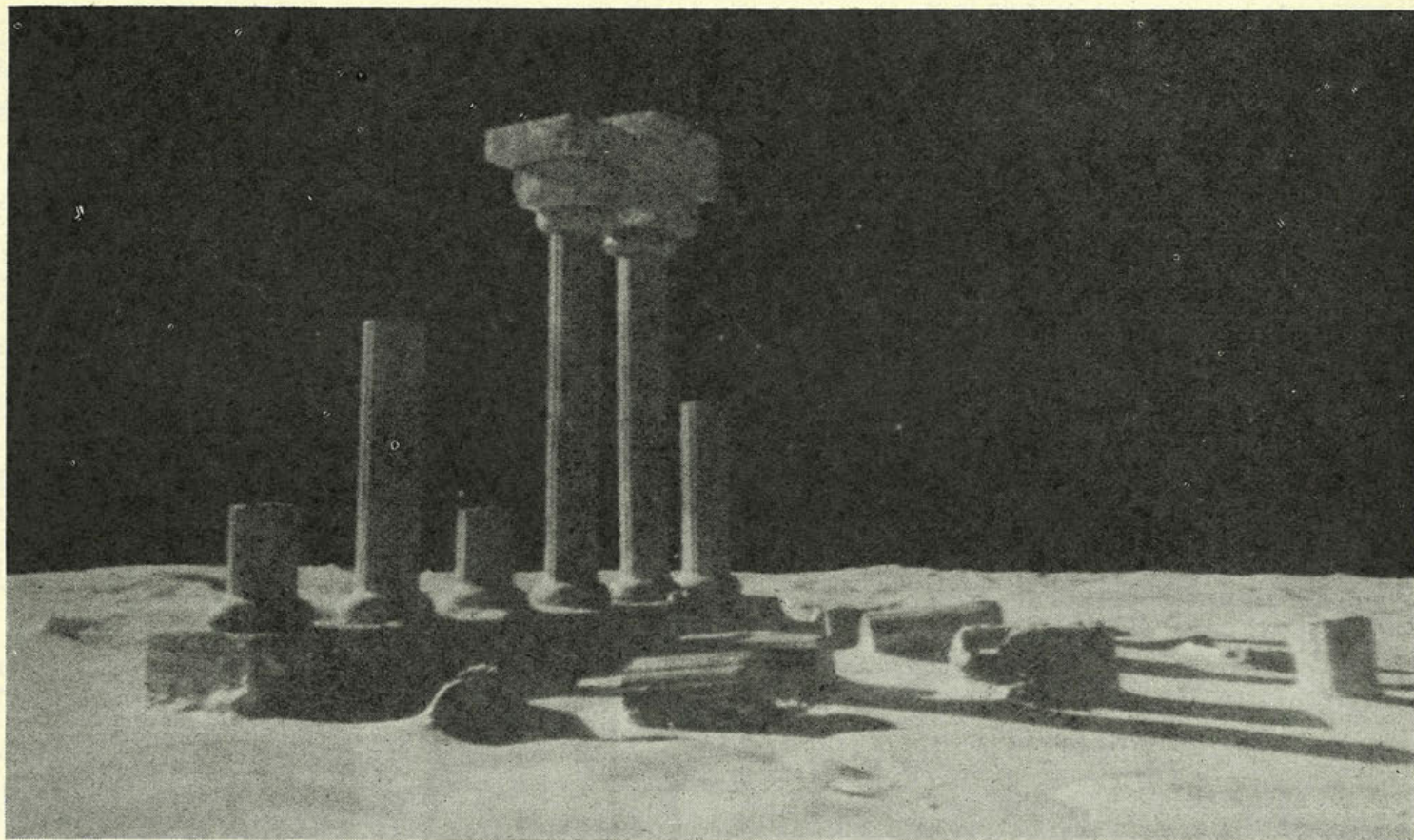
MONOTONY

A problem which will always confront the sound-track "counterfeiter" is the many different ways in which Spanish is spoken in Latin-America. I have talked with Guayaquileños who have barely understood the dialogue in some Mexican and Argentinian films. Hollywood, taking the lowest common denominator, is mostly using voices from Ecuador, Peru and Colombia, where the nearest approach to Castillian Spanish in Latin-America is found. Perhaps it is due to the limited range and tone of the average Latin-American voice, but one has the striking feeling that some half-a-dozen experts are deputizing in the sound-track for the original large cast.

The supply of emotional dramas which come from the Mexican and Argentinian studios have a strong appeal. One finds the same dozen films circulating week after week around the seven or eight small cinemas which concentrate exclusively on the products of these two countries. A poster erected outside the cinema when a film first arrives will do good service again when the same film reappears a week or two later. And so the poster remains, together with a host of others each labelled "To-day". Were it not for the daily papers it would indeed be difficult to discover exactly what was showing.

With the coming of the rainy season towards the end of December, cinema-going takes on a new and grimmer aspect. In addition to the mosquito, which stays for the whole season, the resident has to contend, for the first two or three weeks, with a large, ugly flying cricket which gets into his hair and down his neck. Apart from eating silks and woollens it does no harm, but life becomes grotesque when a few hundred "grillos" invade the silver screen.

In such a way does the Guayaquileño seek his pleasure in spite of difficulties and seemingly unsurmountable obstacles. He does not really complain—things will be better—*mañana*.



Notre Planete la Terre

"FROM CHINA TO PERU . . ."

An account of some films seen in France

By

PATRICIA HUTCHINS

THERE, WAITING IN THE French Legation in Dublin, I seemed already to be back in France. Was this due to hearing the language again, or to some more prosaic reason—a way of cleaning stone floors or a kind of tobacco—which suggested those years spent in Normandy and later journeys to Paris to see films there? In part, it was that nostalgia which the best of French directors have conveyed, absorbing into the terms of cinema a great realistic literary tradition, a nearness to the smell and taste of the country's life.

Before the war I had borrowed from reluctant relatives in London to go to the meetings of the *Congrès du Film Scientifique et Technique*, drawn by the enthusiasm of Jean Painlevé and Dr. Claoué, both so generously prepared to help a young and not very experienced journalist. The material gathered at the Congress and elsewhere enabled me to put a growing appreciation of the serious use of the film into concrete terms. There were articles to write on Painlevé's submarine life studies, his colour experiments with the puppet film *Barbe Bleue* in collaboration with René Bertrand, while other work described the fine nature and biology films of U.F.A., or experiments in Italy or Portugal.

Now, late in 1946, it was possible to go abroad again. A few hours' air journey from the grey-green of the Irish coast and we were passing over the distinctive pattern of

long, straight roads and red-tiled farmhouses, the hedgeless fields of Northern France, to Paris.

There I found the same welcome, and although the Eighth Congress was held on a larger scale, the same atmosphere of informal orderliness prevailed, a sense of co-operation between the thirteen nations represented there. Let us hope this will continue as the Association develops, perhaps into a world federation of those using the scientific film. The term has been interpreted very widely, to include documentary, educational and instructional work as well as the recording of results and actual research by means of the camera.

In the early days it was difficult to obtain British films for the Congress; they stuck in the Customs or became bogged in some office waiting for permits to come through. Similar difficulties were encountered in other cases where productions were sent unaccompanied. Now one is impressed by the growth of liaison work, the many individuals and organisations concerned with the exchange and use of films. What was once optimism has become reality.

Now from China with captions in the ornamental characters associated with scrolls and paper lanterns, comes a study of a solar eclipse, a valuable record in colour. In the same programme there followed *Radar* and *The Microscope*, two instances of the great progress in timing

of image and the spacing of commentary achieved by the British instructional film during the war years. Then *The Gull* was shown, a study in natural conditions along the Swedish coast, made with great skill and a kind of sensuous clarity of vision which is a reminder of Flaherty at his best. Willy Peters, the director, appears to have stood in that love-relationship to his subject which occurs so rarely in the cinema. Was it by accident or personal circumstances an *enballament* or from the power of creative imagination I wonder, that Basil Wright's *Song of Ceylon* reflected the same tension and poetry?

Dr. Thévenard's approach in two well-planned documentaries, *Les ultra-sons* and *La Vipère*, is on a different plane. Yet one recognises a certain quiet culture which finds in film an excellent means of expression, for the cinema, as surely as the "mike", shows up the flimsy and insincere.

As to the workmanlike, record and analysis type of film, where presentation is somewhat subservient to the matter in hand, I should mention the interest shown in *Language* made by Realist Film Unit, profiting by an unique opportunity to show the movements of the tongue. A number of the Russian medical films have already been shown in England, and included *Re-animation of the Organism* by D. Iachine, *Physiological reactions during a Brain Operation* by A. M. Bourdenko, and *The Blood* by T. Loukachevitch, advised by Professor V. Lebedev. Other productions dealing with operation technique, showed the contribution that colour has made to this important work. From Switzerland came Dr. Lauterburg's *Hare Lip and Cleft Palate; Amputation of the Leg* by Professor F. Delitala, from Italy. Other studies included those of Dr. Darget of Bordeaux; M. Prudhommeau, working in 9.5, continues his observations of *Abnormal Children*, and the recording of gesture is another interesting subject which has been investigated both in France and Poland.

In *Metamorphoses*, by Herman van der Horst of Holland, music has been very well arranged to set off some excellent photography. *The Moth*, by Hans Richter, shows an important Swiss industry set up to combat its destructive powers. Yet in these and several other films one felt a certain "old-fashionedness" of approach, due no doubt to circumstances. *Rustic Rhapsody*, from Rumania, caused some discussion after we had seen its courageous exuberance, naïve in the use of cloud-filter cliché—the boy-and-girl sequences among the sun-tipped grasses, etc., etc., etc. . .

Many of the productions shown were preceded by a short introduction. One learnt of the difficulties encountered in Poland in the making of *Liquid Air*, a painstaking exposition of method. Certain French films, begun before the occupation, had been hampered by lack of stock and technical facilities and had only recently been completed. An example was M. Dufour's *Notre Planete la Terre*, in which models and special effects have been used with great subtlety of texture and rhythm to take one back to the dim, strange-shaped early world, its evolution and its monsters.

This same element of unreality is used, in a different way, by Walt Disney in *Principles of Aerial Navigation*, intended for Air Ministry instructional purposes. Its excellence confirms an impression that Disney, if freed from that octopus of a cartoon industry, could provide in his own manner what Lear and Blake, Bunyon and Perrault, the old myth-makers and moralists have done, a wonderful

combination of reality and fantasy. In few films about the air has the experience of flying been conveyed so convincingly.

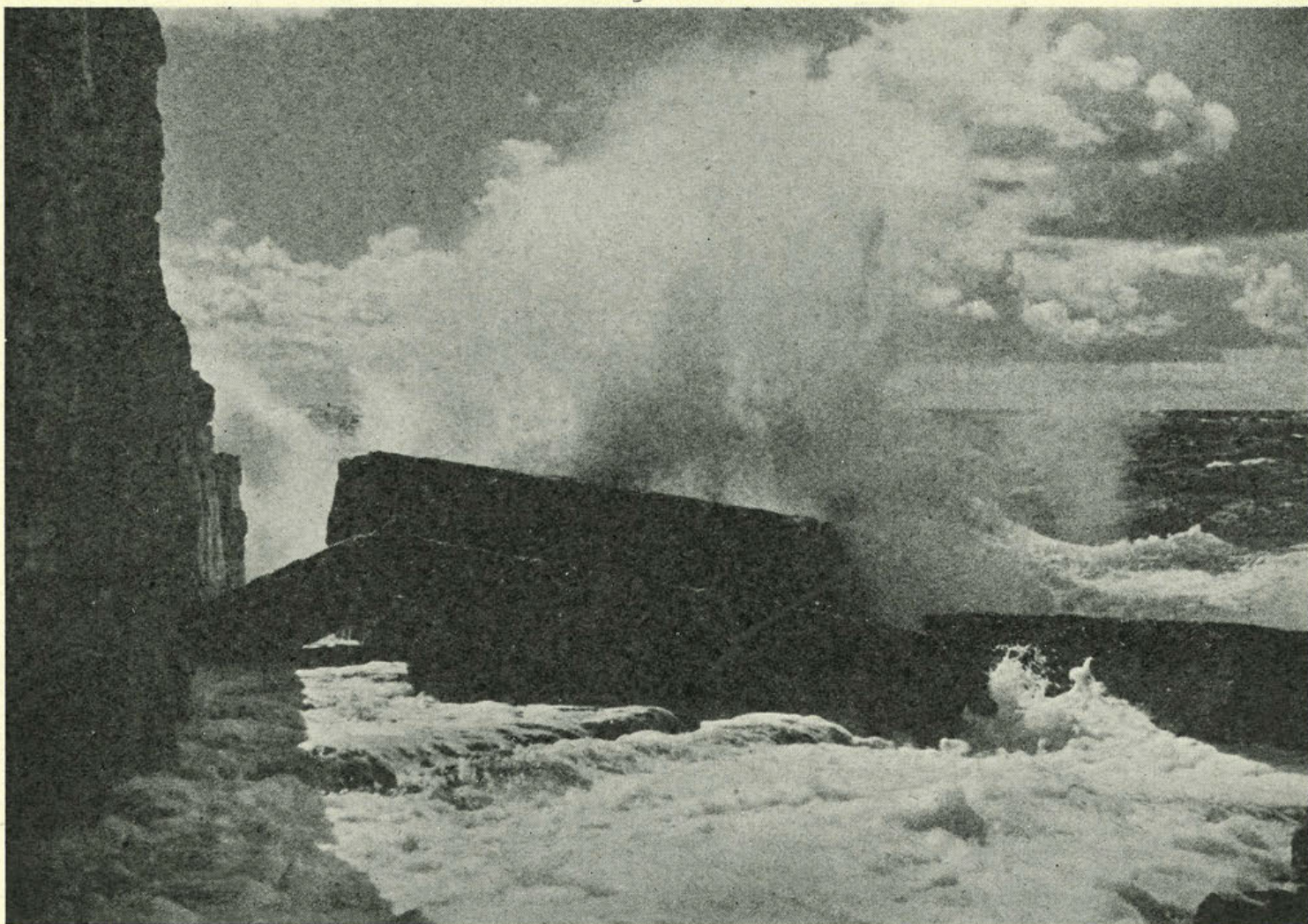
We are moving into a time when art and science will be fused into segments of a circle representing human achievement. Thus it is interesting to speculate what Jean Painlevé might have been in a previous age: a great *metteur en scène* perhaps, for he is both scientist and showman. Commentary to his films, often given personally at the Congress, has wit and brilliance, an "edge" of detached satire, penetration combined with great aesthetic understanding. *Assassins d'eau douce*, unlike much of his previous work, was fortunately saved from destruction by the Germans, and while it shows the same patience, sense of drama and visual beauty, appears less spectacular and rounded off. "I want to work in colour", he said, throwing out his hands. "But when . . . ? the expense . . . ?" Meanwhile a study of animal movement from its simplest form to that of flight, is being discussed and a short on Pasteur and his work, using authentic backgrounds and actual apparatus whenever possible, is in preparation.

When the Congress was over, I met a number of personalities connected with the cinema and saw several other stimulating films. There was Madame Sonika-Bó, of Russian-French origin I believe, who created the "Cendrillon" Cinema Club and is a dynamo of enthusiasm for children's films, her work now coming under the Ministry of Information. She has edited a special library and gives shows and lectures all over France and abroad. Among others, she enabled me to see *The Elephant and the Skipping Rope*, a charming Russian production, made with child actors who seemed simply to be playing a game.

At the Cinemathèque Française, there was Henri Langlois, its founder, who has been responsible for the preservation, chiefly from his own funds, of many valuable films which would have been lost in the vaults of the commercial companies or destroyed. During the occupation he managed, with difficulty, to preserve this fine collection. Now, with a group of enthusiastic men and women, Langlois has been organising a series of most successful exhibitions on the French cinema and its history, at home, in Belgium, Switzerland and elsewhere. I could only see a very small part of these, for most of the material was away on show, the rest being assembled or dismantled, but enough to judge its excellent quality. The catalogues, for instance, were most beautifully produced, showing what could be done with inexpensive materials when used with characteristic French adroitness and restraint.

When seeing the Italian film by Luciano Emmer based on Giotto's "Massacre of the Innocents" and other examples of the painter's work dealing with the Life of Christ, I was much impressed by its effective use of close-up and the manner whereby the wonderful line and solidity of the original paintings was emphasised. "Here", I said, "is the way to provide a means of art appreciation through the cinema, a study in the relationship of form and subject". But in seeing *Guerreri*, or *The Warriors*, which includes Paola Ucello's "Battle of Renango" and work by other painters, one experienced rather a comedown, for swift cutting and the use of "suitable music" had run away with all restraint; the balance and harmony of the previous film had been lost in impressionism.

Although *Farrebique* has been shown in London, for



"Trut"

Svensk Filmindustri

too brief a time, I mention it again for its importance to the French cinema as a whole. The intensity of urban life as it packs itself into overcrowded little rooms and cafés, the shops and streets of Paris or some provincial town, the fog and squalor of riverside and harbour, has been natural to the French director as a background to the interplay of character. But for psychological and practical reasons, the countryside has been given less attention. It is a great deal harder technically to work there, more difficult to combine documentation and story into an authentic whole, and—it needs the understanding of the near-countryman.

Coming from a farming family, Georges Rouquier worked as a linotypist and later assisted in making films. *Farrebique*, which represents a number of farms rather than an actual place, and in its year-round of work the economy of so much France, is Rouquier's return to his childhood. But the detached observer is there also, in showing the introduction of electricity to the district as part of the conflict between old and new, in so skilfully placing the struggle of generations to make the farm, as a series of sequences accompanying the narration of an old man. One will remember these and other moments, such as the oxen at the ploughing, the wintry sun on wet roads as children go to school, the long shadow of afternoon

turning round the wheel of an old cart near the haystack or moving over the wide, field-squared countryside.

Renoir has a different feeling for background, but he brings to the cinema that consciousness of tone-value which is an inheritance from his father, from the lineage of great pictorial art. I had noticed it in earlier films; there was, for instance, the deliberate use of the dark cross-straps of period uniform in *La Marseillaise*, a visual symbol as important to the theme as the song itself. In a fairly short film begun before the war and only completed recently, *Une partie de Campagne*, based on Maupassant's story, there are the inevitable Renoir motifs, striped jersey, the black lace of long gloves, a tabby cat, a velvet neck-band. These are related by their very contrast to the soft bright foliage, the slightly under-exposed effect which conveys a lyricism of mood, through which a certain cynicism, even a hint of Offenbach buffoonery is conveyed—that sharpness which lemon adds to the flavour of a pancake. Yet the whole, made up of delicately-poised acting and a sense of the completeness of a summer afternoon, an acceptance of inevitable separation between the lovers, moved one as great literature can do, adding that something further, that greater extension of experience which the cinema, for all the talk, so seldom leaves as a permanent part of our memory.



It's a Wonderful Life

R.K.O. Radio

THE PHILOSOPHER AT THE CINEMA

By

ROGER MANVELL

THE FILM HAS WORKED its rapid and trailing tendrils tightly round the heart of the world, and the academic specialists are turning from their traditional studies to examine the new and tenacious phenomenon. The serious study of the cinema has been almost entirely devoted so far to its technical aspects, which have in consequence flourished at an astonishing rate. The result is as if an elaborate culinary craft had been developed without any study of the foods to be cooked and served by its means. The craft of printing arrived centuries after the development of literature; the art of the film has yet to develop maturely, although for fifty years the mechanical medium for its dissemination has been present in society*.

The few serious books published on the art and social significance of the film have hitherto come almost entirely from the film-makers themselves. These books have often been biased through a devotion to the film excited by the fascination which craftsmanship in a new technical medium of expression can create in the professional practitioner.

There is need now for the trained mind from outside the craft itself to examine the place the cinema occupies in our lives, as the professor of literature has for long examined the significance of writing as an art and as a social factor. That theoretical stupidities and snobbish intellectual concoctions will be elaborated by an intelligentia, untouched by the emotional pain and triumph of creation within the medium of the film, must be expected and tolerated in order that a new and wider vision may be created for us all by the initiation of genuine academic film studies. Literature has gained immeasurably more through the introduction of organised study than it has been forced to endure through the critical doodlings of inadequately equipped and cocksure students.

* * * * *

The significance of Gilbert Cohen-Séat's initial volume (*Introduction Générale* to his *Essai sur les Principes d'une Philosophie du Cinema*, published last year in Paris), is that a trained philosophical mind has set out to discuss the funda-

*See Cohen-Séat's *Introduction Générale*, pp. 25-26.

mental problems the presence of the cinema has created in modern civilisation. He is as much concerned with the principles of communication through the visual medium of the screen as with the psychological aspects of film production in our present society. His arguments are many and complex; the present reviewer is not competent to discuss the many purely philosophical and psychological problems raised by Cohen-Séat. It is, however, of importance to underline some of the main points made by the author about the cinema.

The cinema has created a new orientation in social communications. It does not, like some arts, exist for the few. Its effects are both quantitative and qualitative. It is universal and can be unvaryingly exhibited on the screens of the world. Hitherto, the background values of art have made it mostly the product of a limited geographical locality or of a limited cultural group. In the case of the film its range of so-called popularity is in inverse proportion to the popular roots of producer and artist, who mostly keep themselves remote from the life of the people, separated by thousands of miles of distance or by totally different standards of life and outlook. The cinema, relatively unbounded by frontiers which limit purely verbal communication, may well be unconsciously initiating a new period in our civilisation, such as began with the introduction of printing to Europe in the fifteenth century.

The cinema so far has lived the *ad hoc* life of opportunism, possessing only the vitality to sell its fictitious dreams to a submissive public. It is esoteric in the sense that it has become a kind of religion with an accepted code of values of its own. Its position is really anomalous in twentieth century society; it represents extravagance without thought; it is primitive because in an age of exact sciences, no corresponding care has been devoted to the discovery and analysis of its principles. It represents, therefore, a lawless power in a society which stands in increasing need of the formulation of a careful and democratic ordering. It is a showman's battleground, and the social and psychological responsibilities of so much power over the universal attention of mankind have not yet been adequately investigated. Even the aestheticians of the cinema have so far been philosophical amateurs. Whether it is yet possible to put the proper principles of the cinema into practice or not, it is high time that they should be examined and promulgated.

Writing as he is with the highest standards of creative achievement in mind, Cohen-Séat claims that so far the brief career of the cinema has not enabled an artistic masterpiece to be made. The cinema artistically is in its adolescence. It concentrates wholly on an easy success with its public, and it has trained them to recognise success by the most superficial standards. Nevertheless, the institution of the cinema has developed to such a degree that the problems facing the new research worker are on a scale which demand wide and elaborate staff-work as well as the careful planning of method. Cohen-Séat distinguishes initially between *le fait filmique* and *le fait cinématographique*.

"Le fait filmique consiste à exprimer la vie, vie du monde ou de l'esprit, de l'imagination ou des êtres et des choses, par un système déterminé de combinaisons d'images. (Images visuelles: naturelles ou convention-

nelles, et auditive: sonores ou verbales.) Le propre du fait cinématographique serait de mettre en circulation dans des groupes humains un fonds de documents, de sensations, d'idées, de sentiments, matériaux offerts par la vie et mis en forme par le film à sa manière". (p. 57.)

Investigation should, therefore, proceed to examine not only the nature of a new and revolutionary medium of communication (*le fait filmique*), but also the nature of the experience which the new medium initiates in mankind when it puts its communicative powers into effect (*le fait cinématographique*).

Cohen-Séat proceeds next to deal with some of the main problems of what he calls *filmologie*†, the science of film studies. The first of these is the absence of a specific terminology of the film: what terminology has so far been used consists of a miscellaneous series of borrowings from the critical terms of the other arts, which only adds to the initial confusion by introducing comparative concepts which only belong properly to these other media. Such words as rhythm and tempo are instanced as typical borrowed terms with irrelevant and confusing implications. The invention and classification of a specifically filmic terminology is a primary need.

The second group of problems is concerned with the psychology of cinema-going. The basic elements of attraction are curiosity and emotional stimulation. Unlike the historical development of most major arts, the aristocrat has never been the film's patron. Since curiosity and emotionalism are the fundamental attractions at this stage of the cinema's development, the film puts the audience at the mercy of its *sensibilité*, its emotional feelings. The cinema is still primarily a place of sensational visual detail; the intellectual curiosity which can be aroused by the verbal media (like the drama) is not dominant. The cinema insists on continuous attention to physical phenomena; it has revived an interest in what Cohen-Séat calls the little things of life. It encourages an unstable, dispersed, superficial and fluctuating attention, without roots in the fundamental problems of living which have been the final distinction of the great works in the other arts.

"L'émotion cinématographique, si nous prétendions la saisir d'une seule masse, ne serait en effet que la torpeur évidente ou la fièvre désordonnée qu'exprime généralement l'attitude collective du public: réaction grossière sans écho". (p. 107).

From this it may be gathered that Cohen-Séat has a poor opinion of the general public: he regards them simply as unsubtle and quite unfitted to become connoisseurs of sensibility in respect of values and standards. Yet the major arts in civilisation so far have always become the predilection of the leisured connoisseur. The public to whom time and circumstance have not brought this kind of culture remain the victims of their own transitory and fragmentary interests; their apprehension has limited range and little depth. They remain perpetual babies, unable to face the hard mental application of the maturer *homo sapiens*. The present nature of the film, the quick-flash of images reflecting the surface of life, flatters and encourages this babyhood, and builds up its conventional

†John Maddison in an excellent B.B.C. Third Programme broadcast on Cohen-Séat's book very rightly pointed out how beautiful this academic word sounds in French and how terribly it sounds in English translation.

little stock of interests and the facile immediacy of its curiosity. Behind these curiosities lies the desire to imitate, which is amply demonstrated by the behaviour of the cinema audience outside its walls.

THE RAW MATERIAL

Cohen-Séat turns next to the technical aspect of the cinema, the deceptive analogies which have been made between it and other arts, and the problem of trying to classify the film as an art at all like the others mankind has produced. Behind the whole of his book there seems to be the implication that the film is something so entirely new, so much a revolution in human communications, that the older conventions of critical analysis merely blind us to its potentialities when they are used in connection with it. The communication between people which is based on language is a symbolic communication: words are in themselves symbols of meaning: on its higher levels language is the integration of ideas. The medium of the film is perceptual: its images present in themselves not thought (the higher function of words) but the raw material for thought. The film has not yet developed its own visual grammar, or the basis of rhetoric, poetry and eloquence which have taken centuries to evolve in the medium of words. The film as a new communicator could, perhaps, be described as only at cave-man level; it works on an initial noun and verb basis; it has yet to make its visual adjectives. Its visual dialectic is a thing of the future, when the mind and eye of mankind expand to create it. As yet, the film as a medium, is insufficiently disciplined to command the complete imaginative absorption which the greatest poetry and music (for example) have come to command. The achievement of that greatness is the challenge of its future development in the hands of the artist. At the moment, such a development is largely inhibited by the conditions of its production which demand the patronage of too uncultivated an audience. Humanity is driven by its boredom to recreation, to play and to the spectacle. It is the opportunity of the arts to sublimate these simpler needs by turning the game, the spectacle and the recreation into an imaginatively absorbing integration of human values, a triumphant demonstration of the potentialities of *homo sapiens*. The greater public do not recognise or desire such a demonstration of what has frequently been called the universal quality in great artistic achievements. They wish for evasion, for escape, for a plethora of curiosities to excite their immediate responses. Only through a study of the science of *filmologie*, writes Cohen-Séat, can the film be freed from the slavery of keeping the simpler people amused. The science of *filmologie* would demonstrate the pathways to its future and challenge the vision of its potential artists.

This inadequate survey of Cohen-Séat's first volume should be sufficient to demonstrate its importance to all those who are the servants of the film, whether as producers or critics. Here is the wider horizon which the philosophic mind is trained to envisage, and which the film so far has lacked. There is no space here to discuss Cohen-Séat's ideas: in any case, they should be pondered and developed at leisure.

Dr. Mayer's initial book on the cinema, *Sociology of the Film*, brings a political philosopher's investigations to our

notice. Half this book consists of documents produced mostly, though not entirely, by children and adolescents, documents in which the individuals concerned have been persuaded to be frank and revealing. Considerable space is also given to summarising the conclusions arrived at by Professor Blumer in *Movies and Conduct*, one of the American Payne Fund volumes. Dr. Mayer's book is on his own admission the results of a side line investigation, and it cannot be called a profound book in the sense that Cohen-Séat's work is profound. Two initial chapters compare the current age of the cinema, first with that period of Roman civilisation which saw a rapid decline in the drama and spectacle, secondly with the Elizabethan era in England. He shows how the decline of Rome was a decline in the effective values in popular culture, and how the people came to enjoy only empty spectacles and the hero-worship of gladiators.

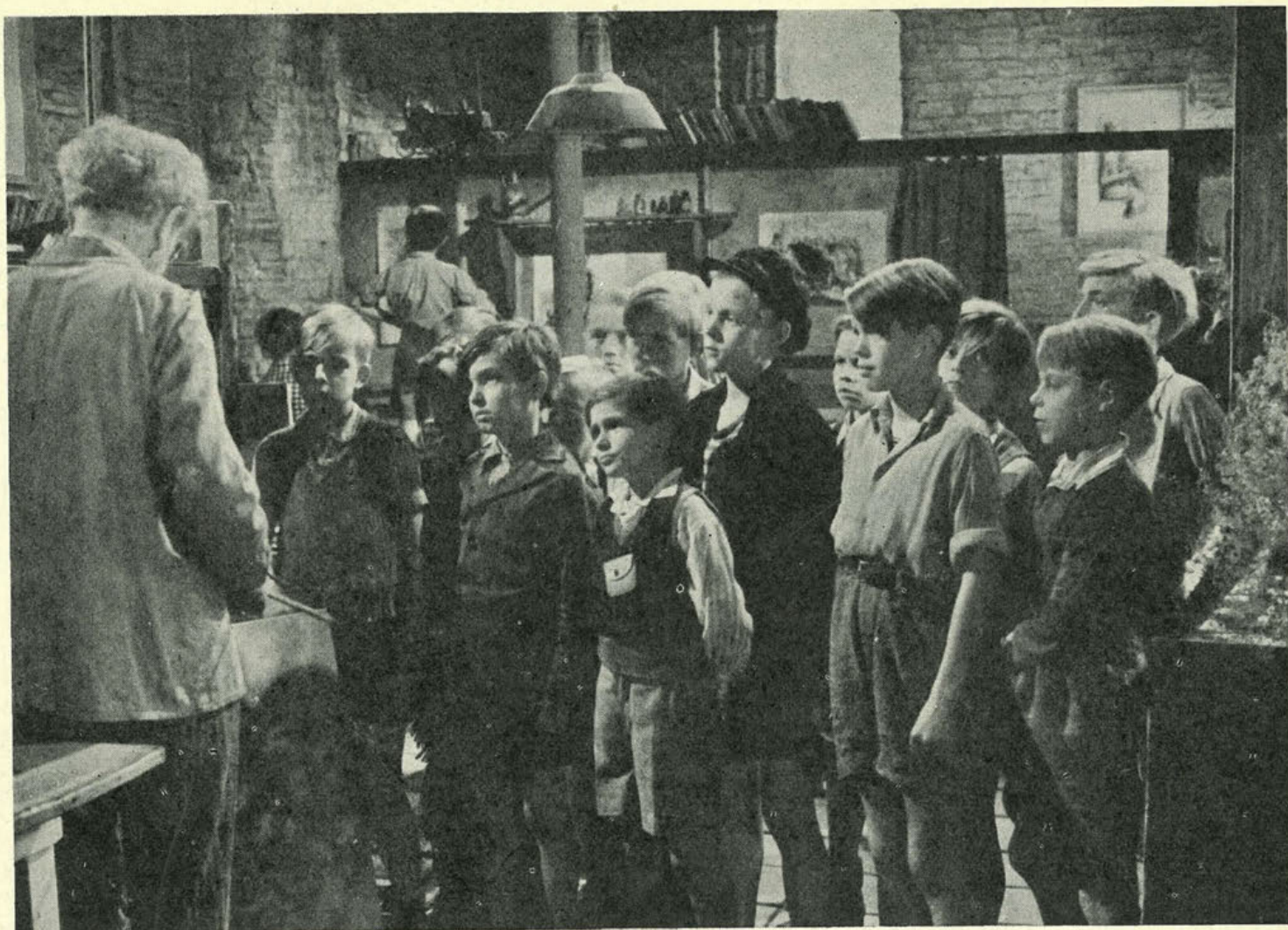
"Only the cinema has a mass appeal which can be compared with the classic theatre of Athens and the Roman circus. The modern cinema alone has a universal audience. Yet where are the social philosophers to-day who reflect on the norms which guide and underlie the contemporary film?" (pp. 40-41).

In the case of the Elizabethan theatre, Dr. Mayer contrasts its vital strength and its close link with its audience with the absence of such qualities in most of Hollywood's product. These initial chapters constitute the more original part of the book. The remaining sections deal with the social phenomena of the cinema to-day, the children's clubs, child and adolescent attendance at ordinary performances, the effect of motion pictures on the outlook and conduct of people of all ages. Dr. Mayer is as aware as his reader that one research worker cannot produce the documentary evidence that is necessary for so widespread a habit as cinema-going. His documents come for the most part from the sources closest to hand, and from a small body of correspondence and questionnaires. These documents become, therefore, specimens of individual reaction rather than any attempt at a public cross-section, such as the various organisations for testing public opinion try to obtain. Dr. Mayer draws conclusions which are for the most part already familiar about the effects of the cinema on child, adolescent and adult behaviour and about the poverty of values which cinema-going encourages when it is unsupported by any richer cultural experience. He advocates a severer state of control of cinemas, the reorganisation of censorship, the encouragement and the development of film appreciation throughout organised education. For its documents alone this book is valuable, and if the general presentation of its arguments seems somewhat miscellaneous (like a collection of individual papers imperfectly linked into what should be a carefully evolved study on so important a theme), they cannot be stated too often or too widely discussed.

ERRATUM

"FOREIGN POLICY AND CINEMA"

We regret that in the above article, which appeared in the Autumn SIGHT AND SOUND, the author's name was given as ARTHUR JACOBS. The joint authors of the article were Mr. JACOBS and NORMAN SWALLOW.



Irgendwo in Berlin

A NEW GERMAN FILM

D.E.F.A.

ANALYSIS OF PABST

An extract from the book "From Caligari to Hitler; A Psychological History of the German Film" by SIEGFRIED KRACAUER, shortly to be published by the Princetown University Press

THE AUSTRIAN G. W. PABST was prominent among the directors cultivating the new realism. He came to the cinema from the theatre, which he had left because of his doubts as to its artistic future. He was a late arrival in the studios; it was only at the end of the post-war period that he made his first film, *Der Schatz* (*The Treasure*, 1924), a legend of love and greed clumsily unfolding within mediæval décors. This dull and impersonal product demonstrated that Pabst felt himself a stranger in a period bent on externalizing inner conflicts and longings without any regard for the given facts. Pabst was a realist. He once said in a conversation: "What need is there for romantic treatment? Real life is too romantic, too ghastly".¹

Real life was his true concern. He began to penetrate it in *Die Freudlose Gasse* (*The Joyless Street*, 1925), an adaptation of a novel by Hugo Bettauer which had been serialized

in Vienna's leading newspaper, "Neue Freie Presse". The film, which soon won fame in Germany and abroad, pictured Vienna during the inflation, with special emphasis on the pauperization of the middle class. Pabst's unhesitating realism in rendering this decline shocked his contemporaries. England prohibited public showings of the film. The versions released in Italy, France, Austria and elsewhere were considerably mutilated.

The Joyless Street contrasts tough profiteers and destitute middle-class people; expensive restaurants sparkling with light and dim-lit homes visited by hunger; noisy effervescence and silent withdrawal into sadness. Surrounded by sadness, the elderly councillor Rumfort sees his savings vanish and finally faces starvation. He would be lost if it were not for his daughter—Garbo in her first important role—who succeeds in getting a dubious job as a nightclub dancer. The ruin of this bourgeois family is portrayed with a social consciousness that transforms it into a typical case.

¹ Quoted from Bryher, "G. W. Pabst. A Survey", *Close Up*, December, 1927, p. 60.

One series of episodes shows the profiteers and their parasites trading stocks, making love to spectacular women and snatching all the joys that money can buy. Another series details the lot of those on the losing side. In their fight for survival a few of them are tragically hampered by inherited decency. Rumfort suffers for the stubbornness with which he shrinks from the slightest concession. Asta Nielsen as the kept woman demonstrates that uncompromising love is likely to perish in a society in which marketable goods supplant the essentials. However, she is an outsider, emotionally and socially. Most middle-class characters proper try to compromise, or simply yield to the powers of corruption. Pabst's film of the inflation elaborates upon the interrelationship between the enforced economic decay of the middle class and the selling-out of its moral values. What he exhibits—for the first time from the angle of a realistic observer—is the feverish finale of that post-war world which, while it still existed, expressed its inmost preoccupations through screen fantasies wavering between the images of tyranny and chaos.

A CLOSED SHOP

The ghastliness of this world is displayed in scenes which seem to record unstaged events. Everyday life of the time unveils itself in the episode of the "joyless street": a crowd on the verge of despair queues up before the butcher's shop, and, accompanied by his grim white dog, Werner Krauss as the brutal butcher walks off to fetch a policeman. In this impressive episode nothing is stylized; rather, it springs from the desire to watch the course events take of their own accord. Pabst "let his characters unfold their plight without the inquisitorial rack".² A convincing proof of his innate realism is the short scene in which Garbo hangs the new fur coat given her in some questionable shop close to her threadbare old coat. For a moment the two coats are seen hanging side by side. In any of Carl Mayer's post-war films, this shot would have had to symbolize the change of Garbo's condition; in the Pabst film, it just shows the two coats in a chance combination which may, or may not, convey a symbolic meaning. Instead of arranging significant pictorial compositions, Pabst arranges real-life material with veracity as his sole object. His is the spirit of a photographer. What Iris Barry says about his *Love of Jeanne Ney* also applies to *The Joyless Street*: "Pabst's work here is in no sense picturesque, it is photographic. His settings and his individual scenes are quite as carefully composed as those of the more obviously artistic German films, but the craftsmanship is less apparent, the spectator is led to feel 'how true' rather than 'how beautiful'." Compared to the open universe into which *The Joyless Street* embarks, the world of *Variety* is rather a closed-shop affair.

It was a strange coincidence that, shortly before the Pabst film, an American film about the German inflation appeared: D. W. Griffith's *Isn't Life Wonderful?* Griffith, the great pioneer of the cinema, had been eager for genuine local color: he had shot the exteriors in Germany, and entrusted several native actors with important roles. His plot differed from Pabst's in that it featured, instead of a German middle-class family, a group of Polish refugees, the Poles being more popular with the American public than the Germans. Nevertheless, the two films had traits in common. Particularly striking was the similarity in their treatment of everyday life under the inflation: like *The Joyless Street*, the

American film focused upon a queue of despondent people besieging a butcher's shop. Pabst may well have been influenced by the emphasis Griffith put on this sequence, and also by the realism with which he handled the backgrounds and all the fleeting moments of life. Griffith's realism was as naive as the message it served to impart. The pacifist credo inherent in his film manifested itself plainly through the reasoning of one of the leading characters—a German worker grieved over his wife's suffering under the famine. This worker, having knocked down a man to rob him of his potatoes, emphatically harangues the audience: "Yes, beasts we are; beasts they have made us. Years of war—beasts they have made us". In addition, Griffith preached "the triumph of love over hardship", thus answering the question "Isn't life wonderful?" in the affirmative. The young Polish couple whom he makes the standard-bearers of his invincible optimism pass through the horrors of the German post-war world without being seriously afflicted, and at the end find happiness in a tiny wooden cottage.

While Griffith in his ill-founded reformist zeal does not confine himself to presenting life as it is, Pabst seems to have no other ambition. With a profound sense of fact he exhibits the predicament of the middle class and the moral confusion of the time. But although his pictorial statements never go so far as to suggest a line of conduct, a solution after the manner of Griffith, they undeniably point to the relation between individual suffering and social injustice. At any rate, this was the impression they made upon many intellectuals; to them, Pabst's realism appeared a moral protest, if not a socialist manifestation.

On the other hand, *The Joyless Street* inclines toward melodrama. Theoretically, Pabst could have yielded to this tendency for the purpose of making his realism acceptable. But his marked interest in melodramatic motifs indicates that their insertion is not due merely to such practical considerations. The longish episode featuring Asta Nielsen disavows his realistic designs and radiates his infatuation with this improbable figure. As Stroheim's famous *Greed* (1924) proves, melodrama need not drain realism of its inner weight. But in *The Joyless Street* it tends to do precisely this. At the very moment when, according to Pabst's own premises, Rumfort and his daughter are bound to become full-fledged victims of the inflation, a beautiful lieutenant of the American Red Cross emerges as *deus ex machina*, and instantly makes these two people happy. Pabst is sufficiently courageous to detail the ghastliness of social misery, but he does not mind cutting short the conclusions that might be drawn from his report. His weakness for melodrama counterbalances those implications of his realism which a generation not yet accustomed to the free display of camera reality too readily took for granted.

After an unimportant film, *Man Spielt Nicht mit der Liebe* (*Don't Play with Love*, 1926), Pabst staged *Geheimnisse einer Seele* (*Secrets of a Soul*, 1926)—a neat account of a psycho-analytical case drawn up with the assistance of two collaborators of Freud, Dr. Hanns Sachs and the late Dr. Karl Abraham. A professor of chemistry (Werner Krauss) learns that his wife's cousin, a handsome fellow, has announced his return from India. The three were playmates in their childhood. Under the impact of this news and certain other occurrences, the professor is anguished by a dream in which reminiscences involving the cousin mingle with confused scenes denoting his longing for a child. The dream culmi-

² Potamkin, "Pabst and the Social Film", *Hound & Horn*, January-March, 1933, p. 294.

nates in his attempt to stab his wife with a dagger. Next day, he is possessed by an inexplicable fear of touching knives, and this phobia makes him act in such a strange manner that his wife and the cousin are deeply disquieted. His own despair reaches its climax when, alone with his wife, he can hardly resist the compulsion to commit the murder anticipated in his dream. He flees from his home to his mother's place, and then consults a psychoanalyst who asks him to stay with his mother for the duration of the treatment.

Now the film summarizes a series of sessions dominated by the professor's narrative: Fragments of his dream alternate with various recollections, and from time to time the psychoanalyst is seen listening to the narrator or contributing explanations. Under his guidance, the elements of the jigsaw puzzle gradually arrange themselves into a comprehensible whole. In his childhood days the professor was jealous of his future wife's outspoken interest in her cousin; his jealousy engendered strong feelings of inferiority which after his marriage made him fall prey to a sort of psychological impotence; and the impotence on its part produced a guilty conscience that some day or other was bound to manifest itself in an irresponsible action. The treatment ends with the salutary shock he experiences in recognizing the subconscious forces that have held his mind in their grip. Freed from his inhibitions, a happy man, he returns home.

The similarities between this film and Robison's *Warning Shadows*, of 1922, are conspicuous. Both are concerned with a mentally unbalanced character cured by means of psychoanalytical, or quasi-psychoanalytical, methods; both emphasize the fact that, prior to his recovery, this character acts in an immature way. Like the exuberant count in *Warning Shadows*, Pabst's sober professor performs the gesture through which most males of the German screen express their immaturity: no sooner does he awaken from his nightmarish dream, than he puts his head into his wife's protective lap. Another scene illustrates his retrogressive conduct even more strikingly. Having cut his meat into small pieces, his mother watches him ladle it with the spoon she has substituted for the dreadful knife—watches him as tenderly as if he were still her helpless little child. Yet what makes *Secrets of a Soul* essentially different from *Warning Shadows* is its unconcern for the significance of this retrogression. While Robison's expressive screen fantasy quivers with an excitement indicating the vital importance of the issues involved, Pabst's film maintains the coolness of an expert report on some psychoanalytical case. *Secrets of a Soul* has rightly been called a "clever blend of a film of fiction and a documentary film".³ In his zeal for documentary objectivity, Pabst adheres anxiously to matter-of-fact statements: no shot assumes a symbolic function, no passage implies that the professor's frustration may well mirror that of a multitude of Germans.

Two circumstances confirm the suspicion that this film which demonstrates how an individual can be relieved of his complexes is itself the product of a state of paralysis. First, at the film's very end the scene shifts to a mountain landscape, with the professor holding a brand-new baby in his arms. It is an epilogue which drags the whole plot into the sphere of melodrama, thus definitely nullifying its broader implications. Second, technical skill grows rampant. Pabst seems to have been interested not so much in his theme proper as in the opportunity it offers for testing certain cinematic devices—in particular those fit to ex-

ternalize psychological processes. As a piece of artistry his film is remarkable. When, for instance, the professor in the course of his treatment remembers bits of his previous dream, these are no longer shown within their original surroundings, but are set against a white background so as to characterize them as stray recollections. No doubt, Pabst is a consummate psychologist; however, his psychological finesse is grafted upon indifference to the primary events of inner life. Potamkin in his comment on *Secrets of a Soul* is justified in saying of its director: "Psychologism became his preoccupation".

Pabst's subsequent film was *Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney* (*The Love of Jeanne Ney*, 1927), an Ufa production in which he turned from the secrets of the individual soul to those of a world in turmoil. He now resumed on a larger scale what he had begun in *The Joyless Street*. This time, the plot, instead of involving a single European capital, encompassed virtually the whole European post-war society, including Soviet Russia. That Ufa should acknowledge the existence of Bolsheviks and even treat them as human beings was not a miracle. Ufa simply thought it good business to capitalize on the Russian fashion inaugurated by Eisenstein's *Potemkin* and Pudovkin's *Mother*—films that had been the rage all over Germany. Naturally, many Germans praised them not so much for their revolutionary content as for their artistic novelty and national vigor.⁴

THE PLOT

The Love of Jeanne Ney was based upon Ilya Ehrenburg's novel of the same title. At that time, Ehrenburg had not yet gained official prestige. A unique combination of Soviet journalist and European bohemian, he wrote books that fused brilliant, though superficial, satire with sentimental romance. His headquarters were in Paris, and he seemed emotionally attached to that Western civilization which he nevertheless accused of being utterly morbid. Ufa probably took to his novel because of its colorful plot and its tinge of melodrama. It is concerned with the love between Jeanne Ney, a French bourgeois girl, and the young Russian communist Andreas—a love that asserts itself in the Crimea during the civil war, and then develops into a great passion in Paris, the center of declining democracy. But wherever the two lovers meet, an unscrupulous adventurer, Khalibiev, intervenes and like a demon thwarts their fragile hopes. Khalibiev is a true incarnation of those evil forces which have their heyday in a period of transition, when all values are confused. Such a period is favorable both to horrible crimes and to heroic sacrifices. This may have encouraged Ehrenburg to indulge in black-and-white contrasts. In the Crimea, Andreas kills Jeanne's father for political reasons, but she immediately forgives him. In Paris, Jeanne finds employment in the detective agency of her uncle, a stingy bourgeois, whose blind daughter has all the traits of an angel devised by Victor Hugo or the naive author of some pulp-novel. The relentless Khalibiev proposes to her, and simultaneously tries to lay hands on Jeanne—a Jeanne glowing with joy over her rendezvous with Andreas. Ehrenburg has indeed contrived to make the communist party send Andreas on a mission to Paris. Now the ultimate

⁴ The Berlin première of *Potemkin* was on April 29th, 1926. The film was selected as the best film of 1926 in Germany; see Weinberg, "Scrapbooks", 1925-27. Grune praised *Potemkin* for being a truly national film; cf. Grune, "Was Karl Grune . . ." "Film-Photos", p. 15.

³ Quoted from Kalbus, *Deutsche Filmkunst*, I, 96.

catastrophe sets in, with Khalibiev as its perpetrator. He breaks into the detective agency to steal a precious diamond; and when confronted by Jeanne's uncle, he murders him, and succeeds in turning all suspicions against her lover. Andreas is done for, and Jeanne is lost.

Of course, Ufa radically removed the moral and political poison this story contained. In the film, Jeanne is spared the disgrace of loving the murderer of her father; it is Andreas' companion who kills him. In her attempt to rescue Andreas the Jeanne of the novel becomes Khalibiev's mistress; the screen Jeanne manages at the very last moment to shun his odious embraces. The scrupulous Ufa version does not allow her to sleep with Andreas in the cheap hotel room they share for a night, but forces the lovers to spend the night on two separate chairs. This shameless bowdlerizing goes hand in hand with irresponsible optimism. Ehrenburg's terrible finale is superseded by a happy ending which assumes much the same structural function as the endings of the previous Pabst films. To make Andreas, the communist, acceptable, Ufa arbitrarily portrays him as a potential convert; upon Jeanne's suggestion he follows her into a Paris church where he kneels beside her before the altar. On the other hand, the film unhesitatingly goes beyond the novel in detailing communist agitation in France. The clandestine Paris press which prints subversive leaflets is a pure Ufa invention. Ufa may have taken pleasure in elaborating upon the embarrassments of a democracy.

Pabst was told to stage his picture "in the American style". He tried to do so in the scenes that show Jeanne's uncle and his detectives recovering a diamond lost by an American millionaire—the very diamond which is to arouse Khalibiev's murderous instincts. However, these scenes with their insistence upon comic "gags" are nothing more than clever imitations and as such inferior to the rest of the film. In a remark to an interviewer, Pabst himself indicated the impossibility of Americanizing German pictures, "for the whole of our mentality is different. . . ." While he felt uneasy about concessions to Hollywood, he readily yielded to the spirit of the Russian films. His scenes of the civil war are strongly influenced by Eisenstein and Pudovkin; he even repeats that typically Russian shot of a character taken from below eye-level so as to symbolize his arrogance or his lust for power.

Yet all this does not invalidate the originality of Pabst's achievement. His *Love of Jeanne Ney* exceeds his *Joyless Street* not only in scope of vision, but in the determination with which it records reality. In rendering it, Pabst proves as inventive as insatiable. The sequence of the Crimean civil war includes an orgy of anti-Bolshevist soldiery. "For this scene", Kenneth MacPherson reports in "Close Up", "one hundred and twenty Russian officers . . . came in their own uniforms, working for twelve marks a day. Pabst supplied vodka and women, waited; and then calmly photographed".⁶ Similarly, Jeanne and Andreas are seen traversing a real Paris square—two passers-by lost in a chance crowd. Whenever Pabst cannot resort to quasi-documentary shots (he relies on them as much as possible (he stages his scenes in such a manner that they nevertheless give the impression of being elicited from life

itself. As in *The Joyless Street*, bits of reality seem to be picked up at random even in cases in which they serve to symbolize inner events. It appears a mere coincidence that, when in the Crimea Jeanne takes leave of Andreas, rain pours down and a throng of poor people separates the two lovers.

EDITING TECHNIQUE

Pabst urged his cameraman Fritz Arno Wagner to stick to natural light values and make the camera rove about. "At Pabst's will", Paul Rotha comments on *The Love of Jeanne Ney*, "Wagner's camera nosed into the corners and ran with the players. . . . Every curve, every angle, every approach of the lens was controlled by the material that it photographed for the expression of mood".⁷ Rotha's remarks imply that in this film the traditional camera mobility of the German post-war screen changes its function. Carl Mayer unchained the camera to picture an imaginary universe swept by instincts, and even though E. A. Dupont in his *Variety* adopted the ubiquitous camera with a realistic design, he set up a world that was a stylized image of reality rather than its objective reflection. Unlike his predecessors, Pabst mobilizes the camera to photograph the casual configurations of real life. *The Love of Jeanne Ney* opens with a scene characterizing the scoundrel Khalibiev: from the tips of his shoes the camera glides along his legs to scattered newspapers, records cigarette stubs on the table, follows his hand as it selects one stub, scrutinizes his face, and finally encompasses part of the dirty hotel room with Khalibiev lying on the sofa.

A personal editing style supplements the camera movement. Pabst arranges the manifold shots in such a way that their very order reinforces the realistic illusion. Characteristically, even the smallest scene consists of a number of shots. Iris Barry remarks of that scene in which Khalibiev sells the list of Bolshevik agents to Jeanne's father: "It lasts about three minutes. . . . Though one is scarcely aware of a single shot, there are forty in this short scene—needless to say, the director cut and edited the film himself".⁸ In combining these atomlike picture frames, Pabst goes the limit. Was he influenced by the emphasis Eisenstein and Pudovkin put on "montage"? The cuts in such screen epics as *Potemkin* and *Mother* have throughout the character of shocks calculated to transform the narrative into a dialectic process which ends with the triumph of the proletariat. But nothing of that kind holds true of *The Love of Jeanne Ney*; this film is far from spreading the Marxist doctrine, and moreover conceals rather than stresses its cuts. Nor was Pabst's editing technique the organic outcome of German screen traditions. Much as they cultivated the moving camera, Carl Mayer and Dupont were not yet in a position to realize all the effects that can be produced through cutting devices. For good reasons: they did not have to depend on such devices to render the self-sufficient world of their imagination. Pabst departs from them technically, because he ventures into the indefinite world of facts. His insistence upon cutting results from his keen concern with given reality. He utilizes tiny pictorial particles to capture the slightest impressions, and he fuses these particles into a finespun texture to mirror reality as a continuity.

This reality is post-war Europe in full disintegration. Its ghastliness unfolds in scenes which are unique not so much

⁶ MacPherson, "Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney", *Close Up*, December, 1927, p. 18; Pabst, "Servitude et Grandeur d'Hollywood", *Le Rôle intellectuel du Cinéma*, pp. 251-55.

⁶ MacPherson, "Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney", *Close Up*, December, 1927, p. 21.

⁷ Rotha, "Film Till Now", p. 188.

⁸ Barry, "Program Notes", Series III, program 3.

for their unhesitating frankness as for their insight into the symptoms of social morbidity. Such a symptom is, for instance, the mixture of cruelty and obscenity in Khalibiev. Surveying various strata of the population, the film sometimes assumes the character of a report on the diseases of European society. It is an infallible sign of Pabst's connoisseurship that this report time and again refers to the testimony of inanimate objects. He assigns to them about the same role as did Carl Mayer in his instinct films, but while Mayer emphasized them as the landmarks of that mute region inhabited by his instinct-possessed characters, Pabst features objects because they help make up the kind of reality he wants to explore. In a decaying or transitional world, whose elements fall asunder, the objects rush out of their hiding-places and take on a life of their own. Behind Jeanne, who is detained by the victorious Bolsheviks, a broken mirror emerges and like a witness tells of glamour and destruction. The iron washbasin in the room that shelters Jeanne and Andreas for a few nocturnal hours testifies to the *tristesse* emanating from this background for futile sex adventures. Through their mere existence the objects corroborate what can be inferred from the events: that the world presented is a jungle peopled with beasts of prey. The film is a tacit accusation. It implies that all human values are doomed unless we change society radically.

An unwillingness to follow up vital issues manifests itself through another quality of Pabst's cutting procedures: the accelerated succession of his picture elements. Whereas the Ukrainian film director Dovzhenko occasionally converts an important shot into a still so as to impress its meaning upon the mind, Pabst never allows the audience to watch any single phenomenon closely. "Every cut", he himself states, "is made on some movement. At the end of one cut somebody is moving, at the beginning of the adjoining one the movement is continued. The eye is thus so occupied in following these movements that it misses the cuts".⁹ His interest in reality as a steady flow is symptomatic of his desire to withdraw from his advanced position.

In the last three films he made during the stabilized period, Pabst returned from the social scene to the "secrets of a soul". Thus he would no longer have to meddle in politics. This change of theme was a retreat; but it may also have been motivated by Pabst's genuine interest in psychology. All three films deal with the inter-relationship between social and psychological processes—to be more precise, between social disintegration and sexual excesses. In *Abwege* (*Crisis*, 1928), Brigitte Helm enacts a wealthy middle-class woman bored by everyday life with her husband. She establishes headquarters in a fashionable night-club and there joins a clique of people who, like herself, try to drown their disillusionment in debaucheries. The film would be negligible if it were not for the night-club scenes in which Pabst manages to evoke the impression that his characters are as they are because of the emptiness of the world they inhabit. There is also the unforgettable figure of a big doll representing an ugly, worn-out roué. When early in the morning the clique invades Helm's bedroom to continue the nocturnal orgy in her company, the roué is seen lying on the floor, watching the exchange of stale caresses with the air of a cynical connoisseur. This doll incarnates the spirit of decomposition.

Pabst's subsequent film was *Die Büchse der Pandora*

⁹ Quoted from MacPherson, "Die Liebe der Jeanne Ney", *Close Up*, December, 1927, p. 26. For camera techniques in this Pabst film, see Balázs, "Der Geist des Films", pp. 70, 73.

(*Pandora's Box*, 1929), fashioned after Frank Wedekind's play about Lulu, a woman who, driven by insatiable sex lusts, destroys all lives around her, and finally also her own. In the pursuit of his basic designs, Pabst could not but feel attracted by the way in which Wedekind related the exuberance of instinctive life to the deterioration of our society. Contemporaries considered *Pandora's Box* a failure. A failure it was, but not for the reason most critics advanced. They held that Pabst was fundamentally wrong in making a silent film from a literary play whose meaning depended mainly upon the fine points of its dialogue. But the film's weakness resulted not so much from the impossibility of translating this dialogue into cinematic terms as from the abstract nature of the whole Wedekind play. It was a texture of arguments; its characters, instead of living on their own, served to illustrate principles. Pabst blundered in choosing a play that because of its expressive mood belonged to the fantastic post-war era rather than to the realistic stabilized period. The outcome of his misplaced endeavors was a film which, as Potamkin puts it, "is 'atmosphere' without content".

Having founded his own film company—it turned out to be a very short-lived enterprise—Pabst produced *Tagebuch einer Verlorenen* (*Diary of a Lost One*, 1929), an adaptation of Margarete Böhme's well-known novel, the popularity of which among the philistines of the past generation rested upon the slightly pornographic frankness with which it recounted the private life of some prostitutes from a morally elevated point of view. The film transfers the Wedekind theme from the literary sphere to commonplace surroundings more in harmony with Pabst's realistic manner: the Lulu of *Pandora's Box* becomes Thymian, a weak-minded pharmacist's easy-going daughter. Seduced by her father's assistant, a villain whom Fritz Rasp endows with all the traits of his Khalibiev, Thymian embarks upon a career which leads her straight into a brothel. Pabst harps on the immorality of her middle-class environment, so that the brothel almost appears to be a health resort. This twist, after the fashion of "Mrs. Warren's Profession", makes the film resemble the street films—a resemblance increased by the emphasis on Thymian's melodramatic generosity. Here, as in the street films, the prostitute with the heart of gold testifies against bourgeois decadence. But to what end? Seemingly unconcerned for the possible implications of his criticism, Pabst elaborates upon the decadence itself. That he is well aware of its affinity to sadism follows from the extraordinary episode of the reformatory to which Thymian is sent. In this episode, a sadistic governess gets a thrill from striking out the rhythm in which the girls have to eat their soup or move about.¹⁰ But Pabst, not content with merely describing her symbolic action, also indicates the particular kind of pleasure she derives from it. While upon her order the scantily clad girls perform exercises, this terrible female marks the tempo and simultaneously swings her head, until her whole body is involved in an oscillating movement that grows ever faster and then all of a sudden comes to a stop. Her conduct recalls that of the Tsarist officer in *The End of St. Petersburg* who voluptuously watches his underling beat a captured revolutionary. Like Pudovkin, Pabst acknowledges the role sex plays within definite social contexts.

¹⁰ Arnheim, "Film als Kunst", p. 103. See also Arnheim, *ibid.*, p. 73; Chavance, "Trois Pages d'un Journal", "La Revue du Cinéma", June 1st, 1930, pp. 53-54; synopsis of the film in "Illustrierter Film-Kurier".

AMERICAN LETTER

From

HERMAN G. WEINBERG

"Every land fills a great book with hero tales, the strife of color against color, and calls it history. Why does not one of you sevenfold wise ones talk of the whole round globe which charms my hand as I turn it? Why talk forever of Chinese Walls, of Egypt's triangle and India's bed of nails, of needled minarets? What made the world round? Was it not the will to fly around it in rejoicing?"

FRITZ VON UNRUH

OUR "SERMON" THIS QUARTER is drawn from the lines above. They describe perfectly what our attitude to "One World" should be; "one world" in the films, as in all the arts, as, indeed, in every field of human endeavor. But what do we have? Let us take the films. Hollywood (for this is a letter from America) is still interested in many worlds, many false little worlds, brightly colored kaleidoscopes to beguile and thus keep us from thinking of one world. That may, perhaps, be "dangerous". Many "truths" are better than one truth, such as "Am I my brother's keeper?" And all the rest . . .

For instance: *Song of Scheherazade* tells us of a picture post-card Morocco to which a handsome youth came, met a pretty girl (not native—that would be "one world"), and was inspired by her to write almost his whole life work as a composer in the space of a week—the operas *Tsar Saltan*, *Sadko* and *Le Coq D'Or*, and the tone poems *Capriccio Espagnole* and *Scheherazade*. What makes this soufflé even more unpalatable is that it is from the same brain, Walter Reisch, who wrote the witty scenarios of *Two Hearts in Waltz Time*, *Merry Wives of Vienna*, *Theft of the Mona Lisa*, etc., in an earlier and happier day, and who once wrote and directed a perfectly charming picture, *Episode*, a tender fragment of post-World War I inflation-ridden Vienna. If the Russian people ever see what Hollywood has done to their Rimsky-Korsakoff, the chances for one world or even half a world will be materially reduced. There is not a hundred consecutive feet anywhere in this so-called film that makes the remotest sense and it vies with last years' *I've Always Loved You* for the dubious honor of being the world's worst.

Sinbad the Sailor spins the kaleidoscope around to the never-never East of the Arabian Nights and the most charming thing about it is what Douglas Fairbanks Jr. said when asked, on his announcement that he would make this film, if he was planning to follow in his late father's footsteps. "No one", replied Doug. Jr., "could follow in his footsteps. He was so light he left no trace". Tho' ever so little of that nostalgic quality that we remember so fondly from *The Thief of Bagdad* is present in this film, it is written, directed and played tongue-in-cheek and gives no offense, which is getting to be a great deal these days. The Irish beauty of Maureen O'Hara is no more Oriental than was Buffalo Bill, but the eyes rest easy on her, as they do, indeed, on all the pretty gauds and baubles with which the story has been told. But pipe-dream it is, never-the-less, and it has as much to do with one world as has *hashish*.

Despite the fact that *The Razor's Edge* goes as far afield as India, it does not bind the peoples of the earth together,

save in ennui; nor would *Lady in the Lake* help the cause of the United Nations a whit more. Indeed, the whole fuss about the latter film in America was that the audience was "starring" in it with the players because a moving camera took the place of the film's protagonist—how childish must films be "sold" to Americans to entice them, or should one say wake their jaded appetites, into please buying a ticket to see this exhibition. Not a reviewer mentioned an earlier and far more notable use of the moving camera, *The Last Laugh*, wherein the method was not an affectation, as it is here, but the legitimate use of an expressive device.

The kaleidoscope spins . . . "all for a penny . . . a penny for all. . . ." America's deep South in the ante-bellum Civil War period as pictured in Disney's *Song of the South*, with its proud white aristocrats and servile black slaves and "never the twain shall meet". Disney has developed his grafting of live and cartoon action in the same frame to a remarkable extent in this depressing film, but the after effects of the film's Jim Crowism mitigates against even this. It is a pity because the film has moments of pure, regional American humor in the cartoon sequences. One world, indeed!

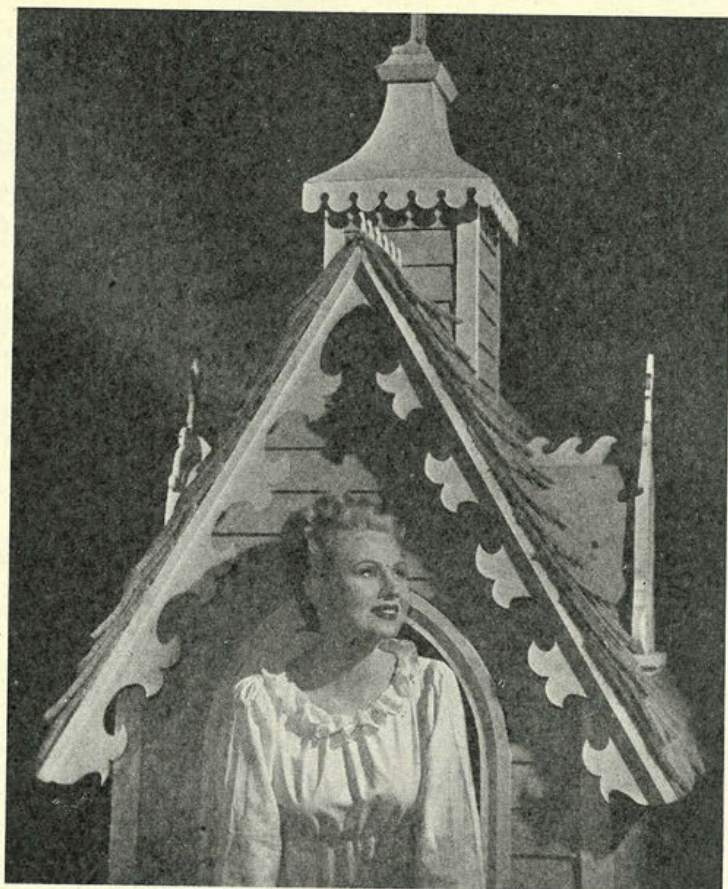
NOT LANG

Cloak and Dagger I tho't the least Lang-ish of all his films and I can't see how he was very happy about *that* scenario, even tho' it hops from America to Italy under the German occupation. One need only recall Vladimir Sokolov in Renoir's *Les Bas Fonds* and as the Italian scientist here to measure the distance between the universality of the latter film with the parochialism of the former, aside from Gorki—which is, come to think of it, quite an "aside". But Lang can do so much better that forgiving him in this instance is like forgiving a virtuoso for an occasional slip—one can't be more than human. And, for that matter, I suppose this goes for Disney, too. But let us not forget that you don't achieve one world by caricaturing human beings. People don't like to be misrepresented.

My Darling Clementine is, I suppose, no caricature, and is, in fact, a good *genre* Western that you will like if you like that sort of thing. I find it relaxing tho', of course, it has utterly nothing to do with anything beyond its own dusty horizons. But if this is what you want, you sure have it here, pardner. John Ford directed.

I've left Capra for the last because his film is the most ambitious. *It's a Wonderful Life* is a parable told in terms of today and often warm, human and likeable, but it's as false as a scenario, shrewdly contrived to "please" an audience, can make it. It is not wrong in itself to try to "please" an audience, but to do it in terms that are not related to the world of reality but to those of day-dreams and wishful thinking is wrong. When it is all over it hasn't *proved* a thing—it has, in effect, only said: "Wouldn't it be nice if the world were full of the milk of human kindness?" My only answer to that is—it certainly would.

Two items of heartening interest, however, are the recent discovery in Hollywood of a reputedly complete print of *Greed* (there appears, also, to be a second copy in Buenos Aires, where my informant tells me "it is shown annually to a select (*sic!*) audience"), and the news that Stalin, himself, has permitted Eisenstein to proceed with the revision of Part 2 of *Ivan the Terrible* and the completion of this historical trilogy with the third part.



I Wake up Dreaming

R.K.O. Radio

IT IS matricide of a sort. The motion pictures which owe their life to the tolerance of illusion, murder illusion. Because the camera with its motility and the film with its artifice can penetrate to the ends of the earth and follow a shooting star for the length of its course, the medium is forever constrained to say the unspoken, to visualize the unseen, to materialize the ephemeral. Remorselessly it tracks its own best dreams to an untimely grave.

When I was small, it was my favorite bedtime entertainment to be read the story of a beautiful princess with raven locks. Having dark hair myself and never having seen a raven, I naturally imagined the princess to be a blonde. One night I glanced between the covers of the book and caught a glimpse of her portrait. She was nothing more than an ordinary brunette, like me. I burst into tears, and from then on princess and book were banished from my nights.

That was my fault, not the artist's; but in films it is the artist's fault more often than mine. How often a cherished character out of a novel or history, modelled in grandeur and endowed with attributes drawn partly from fact and partly from imagination is dwarfed in performance, cut down to the size of an insufficient player in an ineffectual role. But this is only a minor theme in a symphony of major discords. For if you expose your ideality to the disenchantment of stage or screen you do so at your own risk. It is your privilege to stay away when your heroes are at stake.

More fundamental is the violence which motion pictures do to their own intentions when they destroy, with second-rate or too literal conceptions, the fiction on which they

THE MOVIES MURDER ILLUSION

by

HERMINE RICH ISAACS

Associate Editor, "Theatre Arts"

must stand to be believed. For then there is no escaping the ultimate disaster.

Examples are legion. In a typical story a young composer (cast John Garfield in the role) makes numerous sacrifices and demands in the name of his talent. Finally, the evening comes when his symphony is to be played at Carnegie Hall. The audience is breathless, the critics expectant, the composer nervous but confident. The conductor raps on the podium. Silence. The performance begins—and an illusion comes to an end. For the composition is nothing more than a second-rate hash of reminiscent themes. With the turn of a musical phrase the props are snatched from under the story. It has lost its bite, its justification.

DISILLUSION

A few years ago, Albert Lewin made the first of a series of films transferring challenging literary subjects to the screen. Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* was the story of a broker who abandons family, home and the contemporary estimate of moral behaviour in order to pursue the implacable call of art. Under Lewin's temperate direction the narrative revealed the artist's stature by measuring the effect of his work on the people about him. It refrained until the last reel from producing the evidence. Eventually, so the story went, the artist repaired to the South Seas where he painted his greatest canvases and finally died in a conflagration that consumed his home and his work. In the blaze of the fire, his masterpiece was revealed. There, displayed in a sudden access of Technicolor, was a mural descended from a bar-room, a piece of inferior representation which cast its shadow of doubt back down the whole length of the motion picture.

Such instances multiply in the upper film brackets. Countless variations on the theme can be drawn without once referring to quickies and small budget shoddy. Bernadette's virgin. The Stone Flower (in the current Russian fantasy). Walt Disney's Snow White, his Good Fairy in *Pinocchio*. Nor is the area limited to art and the angels. The warrior on the field of battle, the crusading editor, the political speaker, the Devil himself, all have suffered when film realities diminished the stature with which imagination and the story had invested them.

For imagination is the crux of the matter. On the stage a necessary convention protects the playwright from the obligation of revealing scenes or events that are larger than life or, more literally, larger than the stage. A play can be written about Jesus Christ in which Christ never makes an entrance. The drama of a great artist is not compelled

to mount examples of his work. In the theatre greatness or valor is revealed not so much by its image as by its reflection, its recollection, its aftermath. Instead of stopping down the imagination by crowding it into a literal mould, the play releases the imagination by allowing each member of the audience to mould an image limited only by the measure of his own ingenuity.

On the screen this is not the case. Because the film is able to move to the battlefield, it is compelled to re-enact the battle, or give good and sufficient reason for failing to do so. So dynamic are films and so demanding their audience that there is nowhere on heaven or earth or in hell beyond the gaze of the camera.

VALEDICTORY CLASSIC

If the films are frequently hobbled in this trap of their own devising, such a destiny is by no means inevitable. By way of illustration, contrast the fate of two Broadway hits of recent vintage in their adaptations for the screen.

Ruth Gordon's play *Over Twenty One* concerned the adventures in Officer Candidate School of two celebrated authors, Max Wharton and his wife Polly. The excellence of their writing was reported, its effect revealed, but its contents remained charitably unnoted. The film adaptor, however, could not leave it alone. He incorporated into the script an editorial, ghost-written by Polly for her husband, and thereupon set Max to reading it before the assembled ranks of the OCS for the climax of the film. Aside from the fact that such an occurrence seemed ludicrous the editorial itself proved a rather foolish development of a faulty and inaccurate metaphor. Instead of shaking the earth it succeeded in shaking nothing but the faith of the audience.

In *The Male Animal* the conclusion also revolved around the reading of a literary work of fame, the last letter of Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Professor Tommy Newton was threatened with the loss of his job if he insisted upon reading the letter to his English class. He read it. In the play the crucial episode took place offstage, and the audience shared the excitement only by indirection. In the film, however, the whole scene was enacted and, miraculously, the motion picture script derived an increment of power from the episode. For Vanzetti's valedictory was a classic of direct emotional simplicity. Its effect on the celluloid audience was informed for the real-life audience by its effect on themselves.

A MIRACLE HAPPENS

The moral is obvious. If the films' predilection for motion is a hazard it is also an opportunity. Many of the illusions which film-makers crush between clumsy fingers were first created by artists with less materials at hand than those of the most modest artisan of the screen. Our visual concept of Christ owes its origins more to the paintings of the Renaissance than to any other source. Our dream of love is as much the product of the poet's words as it is the crystallization of our own experience. If our fancies suffer at times from confinement, occasionally they burgeon in the life-giving presence of a great creation. Then a miracle happens, and the wonder is so much the greater for having run the peril of disaster.

Such a miracle was *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, Carl Dreyer's extraordinary film which conceived a revolutionary portrait of the Maid through Falconetti's performance and Rudolph Mate's photography. So powerful was the film's conception that it took its place as the prototype, the norm against which all other portraits must forever be measured. Such a miracle, in another sphere, was Walt Disney's animal kingdom in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (as opposed to the cardboard manifestation of the child). Such a miracle is the Battle of Agincourt in Laurence Olivier's *Henry V*.

It is too much to ask that the motion pictures should pass a miracle every day. To ask, however, that with an exercise of competence and good taste they refrain from desecration seems within the province not only of reason but of necessity. One need not demand that Beethoven write movie scores in order to deplore the poverty of his imitators. One asks not greatness, but merely a suitable counterfeit.

AN OLD STORY

Twenty-five years ago, with the advent of sound, the largest mass disillusionment in the history of motion pictures set in. Actors and actresses who had looked their way into millions of hearts, talked their way out of films in a matter of weeks. Not only did voices need to be trained or replaced to accommodate the new machinery, but words were suddenly thrust into prominence. In the face of inexperience, scripts became networks of banality and dramatic poverty so burdensome that aesthetes were able to insist for years that sound motion pictures were a hybrid and inferior brand of art which would never replace the silents. The story is old, but what needs to be remembered is that only after the scriptwriters and the actors had begun to master their crafts could the purism of the hyper-critics be shown up convincingly for the nonsense it was.

The advent of sound brought not only words but the endless possibilities of music and it is, today, in the field of musical performance that the films have developed their highest skill in simulating excellence. *A Song to Remember*, *The Seventh Veil*, *Appassionata Sonata*, *Humoresque* are just a few of the films of several nations that have succeeded in making the story of a performer's prowess convincing with the evidence of his work. In fact, with the sound engineer's ability to piece together the best notes and measures from several recordings in the manner of a jigsaw puzzle, the films are frequently able to give the public a performance of more sheen and perfection than the concert stage. If they sacrifice something of spontaneous inspiration in the process, this is a distinction keyed to perceptions of far greater delicacy than those of the general audience.

Granting that the film's ability to make things explicit is an aspect of its greatness, there are times when elision may be the better part of valor. Already the film is subject to certain conventions, commonplace circumlocutions that drive their point home without ever revealing the bludgeon. In American films, for instance, all love ends with a kiss and a fadeout. So inevitable is this formality that audiences all over the world have come to accept the part for the whole with hardly a murmur. Who is to say that

the gospel according to the Hays Code in this regard has not spared illusion innumerable defeats?

The English films, though not always to their credit, are expert at glozing over the difficult or the sensational, at pulling up somewhere short of the challenging moment. Carol Reed provides a classic example of this talent put to useful effect in one episode of his extraordinary motion-picture *Odd Man Out*. The mad painter wants to do a portrait of the wounded revolutionary, to record what there is in the eyes of a man who looks upon death. In his continuity Mr. Reed tells us all we need to know about the painting: that the artist is second-rate, that his pursuit is mad, that he could not help but fail. Tactfully, he forebears from belaboring the point by showing us the painting.

What if the makers of *Song of Bernadette* had refrained

from corporealizing the apparition of the Virgin and contented themselves with disclosing its effect on the peasant girl of Lourdes? The spiritual experience would have been sufficient. One might have imagined the vision in the guise of a stained-glass madonna with the sun shining through; another might have summoned up a portrait by Leonardo; still another might have seen it in terms by calendar art of the sort that was, in fact, projected. And none could have caught so much the essence of the experience as there was on the radiant face of Jennifer Jones in the role of the maiden transformed by an act of faith.

At sunset a painter turns his back on the west and looks instead toward the ruddy glow in the east. If at times the films are unable to summon sufficient stamina to face the light, they might do worse than imitate the painter, and examine its reflection.

THE HISTORY OF THE CINEMA

An Experiment in Filmstrip

THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY to study the history of an art, through the enjoyment of the works it has produced in their successive stages of achievement. With literature and music this is possible at first hand, provided one has a library accessible or a collection of gramophone records. With the drama and painting it is possible at second hand, since plays can be printed and pictures reproduced. But with the film the problem of historical study is more involved. An increasing number of students of all ages is demanding facilities for this study and finding out how few there are at present. Reliable books of film history in English are practically non-existent: the progress of the film is so rapid that the lapse of a very few years makes a published work on the cinema out of date unless it is constantly revised. The illustration or quotation of the films themselves has to be limited to verbal descriptions, and these worded in such a way as to evoke in the reader a sense of the succession of pictorial images in motion, which is not easy. Films-stills, unless carefully chosen, can create the wrong impression in the mind of a viewer if he has not previously seen the film, and this is only too often the case with foreign films and older films. The nearest to a proper film history we could get is the collection, annotation and orderly presentation of numbers of the so-called classical films interspersed with numbers of typical so-called commercial pictures, showing the parallel development of the art and industry of the cinema. These facilities exist to a certain degree in some countries and require substantial financial subsidy to be maintained.

To meet some of these difficulties, Common Ground, makers of educational film-strips, asked me on behalf of the British Film Institute to prepare an extensive series of still-pictures in strip form to illustrate the main development of the cinema in Europe and America, and Mr. Howard Cricks, Secretary of the British Kinematograph Society, to prepare a supplementary series of strips dealing with the evolution of film apparatus from its invention to the present day. Both series of film-strips will be kept up-to-date in the future by the addition of supplementary material, which will endeavour to keep pace with the main trends in the

progress of the cinema. Each film-strip is fully annotated in an accompanying booklet.

Most of the important films in the history of cinema are inaccessible to the film student, either because no prints have been preserved, or the rights of reprinting are withheld, or more especially because the duping and printing of old films is a prohibitively expensive process except in relatively small numbers. The aim of the film-strip series is to acquaint the student who has a relatively small amount of time to give to the subject with some of the chief films in each of the main national cinemas of Europe and in the American cinema. Collectively the film-strips and their accompanying booklets provide an historical survey which does not exist complete in any other form. They are suitable for use in schools, youth clubs, film society groups, Service educational courses, etc.

The following is an analysis of the strips, each of which contains between thirty and forty pictures:

The History of the Art of the Film in Europe and America

*Early European and American Cinema, 1895-1914 (one strip).

*Soviet Russia (two strips).

*Germany (two strips).

*France (two strips).

Sweden and Czechoslovakia (one strip).

*Great Britain (three strips).

America (three strips).

The Technical Development of the Cinema

*The Invention of Kinematography (one strip).

The Development of Film Apparatus, I and II (two strips).

Colour and Stereoscopy (one strip).

The films-strips are being retailed at 12s. 6d. (including the booklet), and are obtainable from the Educational Supply Association, 181, High Holborn, London, W.C.1 (for Britain and Crown Colonies); orders from other countries should be placed direct with Common Ground, Sydney Place, London, S.W.7. Those marked by an asterisk are ready now, and it is hoped that the whole series will be ready by the Autumn.

A FILM ANALYSIS OF THE ORCHESTRA

A considered review of the Crown Film Unit production

By

HANS KELLER

DON'T ASK BENJAMIN BRITTEN what he is doing, and tell him to do it again. For he is doing something sensible, anyway, and he tackles the job—any job—with supreme sensitivity, and with a downright uncanny surety which alone, if nothing else, shows the perfect craftsman to be something more than the perfect craftsman. What more? Well, the word “genius” is always being overworked when there are few geniuses about, but that must not prevent us from using it when, for once, it is applicable.

Even where Britten newly experiments, or let us rather say, innovates, the result does not sound experimental. I have indicated this fact when discussing his latest opera “The Rape of Lucretia”¹, and I must now point to it again, on occasion of his “Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra” which forms the basis of the educational film *Instruments of the Orchestra*.

“The Young Person’s Guide”, which takes the form of variations and a fugue on a magnificent tune of Purcell, reached the concert hall before it reached the screen. It was received with enthusiasm by the public and the critics alike². “It need hardly be said that a composer of Britten’s native wit and ingenuity has made this treatise upon orchestration highly entertaining as well as instructive”. (The Music Critic of *The Times*). “The brilliant and clever Variations of Britten. . . .” (F. Bonavia in *The Daily Telegraph*). “Britten’s brilliantly clever and witty ‘Young Person’s Guide’ . . .” (Scott Goddard in the *News Chronicle*). To everyone who cares about art and art criticism such extreme unanimity of praise is very gratifying. However, as Thomas Russel has pointed out in his analytical note to the first performance of the piece, “. . . some (of the variations) are serious and some are frivolous”, and it is the serious aspect of the work that has, I think, been a little neglected. In a word, the composition is not only brilliant and witty, but also—beautiful. Needless to say, it is among the best music that has ever been written for the cinema, and one may add that it is not only a young person’s guide to the orchestra, but also, in an implied if unintended fashion, something of a young composer’s guide to orchestration.

PRACTICAL ANALYSIS

If one wants to give a practical analysis of the orchestra, instrument by instrument, the most impressive way of doing this is, of course, to parade what would otherwise be bits and pieces within the frame of an artistic whole. And Theme and Variations are the most suitable frame for the orchestra’s taking itself to pieces without breaking itself

to pieces. At the same time, Theme and Variations happen to be an exceedingly suitable form for Britten to compose in: Everyone acquainted with his works knows his particularly strong tendency towards the art of variation, and his mastery of that form.

Turning from the music itself to the screen, we needn’t turn a great deal: The structure of the film necessarily corresponds to the architecture of the music; picture and music must, therefore, be discussed in close conjunction.

A double asset of the film is its economy of both talk and musical material. There is not an unnecessary word, nor an unnecessary note; within 19 minutes the wide field over which the complex apparatus of the modern symphony orchestra extends is systematically covered and re-covered. Thus the chief enemy of education, boredom, is not allowed to intrude.

The beginning of the film is devoted to the tuning of the instruments whereby the atmosphere is naturally set. Dr. Sargent appears under applause and amiably explains the purpose of the show, then turns round to conduct the first statement of the theme by the full orchestra. The theme is stated six times in succession: after the full orchestra has had its say, each section of the orchestra announced by Dr. Sargent gives its own version of the theme; even the percussion instruments are allowed to bang their version all on their own. A recapitulation of the original (full orchestral) version concludes what might be described as the exposition of the film. It will be noted that this exposition contains a broad analysis *and* a synthesis.

EXQUISITE BEAUTY

Now, with the theme’s original version again fresh in mind, we are presented with the detailed analysis. Thirteen variations, each, of course, introduced by Dr. Sargent, show us the various instruments of the orchestra. The necessary brevity of the variations is forgotten over the finesse and concision of their construction. Each represents a well-defined characterological study of the instrument exhibited.

An exquisite beauty spot is already reached with the second variation, a melancholy piece which fully brings out the plaintive quality of the oboes, while the violins are bound to ingratiate themselves with youth in their own (fifth) variation, based upon the polonaise rhythm. Incidentally, Mr. Stratton, leader of the L.S.O., shows the appropriate gusto as he visibly tightens his mind (and bow) before he and his colleagues plunge into this miniature-polonaise.

No doubt the Young Person will see the fun of the double-basses’ two glissandos (eighth variation), and the

¹ “Britten’s New Opera in London”, *Reconstruction* (New York vol. xii/48).

² Cf. also this journal, vol. 15/60, p. 135.

two trumpet players actually show histrionic talent in their (self-created?) pantomimical comedietta at the end of the eleventh variation. A humorous high-spot is also provided in the twelfth variation, where the tuba tries, with great success, to be self-important.

The Fugue makes up the third and last part of the film. "Having taken the orchestra to pieces", says Dr. Sargent, "we must put it together again". Here, as elsewhere in the film, educational and aesthetic functions combine: not only does the fugue afford a pedagogic synthesis after the analysis, but as musicians we also know it to be a satisfying sum-up at the end of a set of variations.

The piccolo announces the subject of the Fugue, and the instruments enter in the same order as in the preceding analysis. At the very end we get a grandiose climax, a synthesis within the synthesis: the brass play Purcell's theme while the others continue, and finish, Britten's Fugue.

COMMENTARY

The musical execution is, on the whole, very good, though there is a painful lapse in intonation in the double-basses' variation and, in the Fugue, a less serious slip in intonation among the violins.

Dr. Sargent's commentary, while not altogether adhering to what, I gather, is the original text appearing in the score, is no wise forced, always forceful and often funny.

But when he says: "The violins are divided into two parts: first violins, second violins", and *all* the violins lift their instruments to the words "first violins", the Young Person may be forgiven for asking, as he certainly will: "Where are the second violins"? (Note that at this point the separate islands on which firsts and seconds sit are not to be seen.) It would, of course, be unusual for first and second fiddles to sit to attention one after the other, although they are to start at the same time, but then, as Dr. Sargent says, it is not usual for a conductor to talk. To bring a film of this sort to perfection, every detail has to be heeded with unprofessional, naive eyes.

For the rest, the visual arrangements are pretty satisfactory. The instruments are well placed, and so is the camera with a single exception: the view you get of the tuba in the Fugue is rather poor. And before the harp's variation (the ninth), the Young Person is liable to be caused a headache: he is shown, for a few seconds, the harp's music and just as he starts to make something of it, it is gone.

Then there is the general fact to be considered that the Young Person will probably not be able to take it all in. Thus, in order that he may assimilate more of the elementary instruction he is offered, it might be a good idea to add, in the Fugue, sub-titles with the names of the various instruments as they enter. In this way the suppressed cries for help which I seemed to sense around me in the cinema ("Stop! What did he say that damned instrument was called"?) could be avoided.

Also for the purpose of more complete appreciation, leaflets on the film might be issued, to be used *ad libitum*, before or after the performance. And for strictly educational purposes, the film ought to be shown twice over for those who are interested: it is short enough.

But the most serious obstacle in the way of adequate appreciation is the defective sound reproduction. This has

Instruments of the Orchestra (Crown Film Unit).

Music: "The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra":
Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Purcell, Op. 34,³
by Benjamin Britten (*Coalface*, *Night Mail*).

Producer: Alex Shaw (*Under the City*—with Arthur Elton,
Airmail—with Arthur Elton, *The Future is in the Air*,
Penicillin—with Kay Mander).

Director: Muir Mathieson.

Introduced by Dr. Malcolm Sargent with the London
Symphony Orchestra.

Recorded by Ken Cameron.

already been noted by Mr. Desmond Shawe-Taylor:⁴

"... the tone that reached our ears was not only muzzy and feeble in volume, but so lacking in the higher frequencies that much of the individual ... colour of each instrument was lost ... Whether (this was) due to an inherent flaw in the sound track or to maladjustment of the Curzon reproduction apparatus is more than I can undertake to say".

I tried to investigate this question, *i.e.*, I went to the Curzon Cinema on several occasions and I am glad to say that adjustment was improved upon. But even so, the sound reproduction was never adequate, indeed, remained filmy to a damaging extent. So, while part of the fault rested—temporarily—with the Curzon apparatus, the question where the rest of the fault lies is, at the time of writing, still an open one.

As I left the cinema and glanced back at it, both actually and metaphorically, it struck me that not a single still from the film was displayed outside and that the name of the composer was not shown, whereas, conductor and orchestra were advertised. With due regard to the fine work done by Dr. Sargent and the L.S.O., the most important person in this kind of film is the composer (whether or not he has succeeded in his task).

Nor, by the way, is the composer unimportant on occasions where he is less important. In fact, come to think of it, why not always exhibit the name of the film composer and thus invite praise or criticism? If we want a precedent, I recently saw some ordinary film advertisements in one or two Austrian dailies and was surprised to find the composers' names prominently displayed.

But back to my backward glance at the cinema, though, to be sure, its metaphorical part immediately caused me to glance ahead. This successful experiment opens many roads for the educational film on music. Nor am I only thinking of education for youth: Instruction for the more experienced adult might perhaps be the next step. For instance, what about a pendant to this film, say, a "Music Lover's Guide to the Orchestra"? This would not, of course, be the same thing all over again, though the music could once more be self-contained, ready for use in the concert hall as well as in the picture-house. But the work could be far more extended and the study of the instruments could thus more fully meet adult requirements, the most elementary instruction being omitted.

I am sure that *Instruments of the Orchestra* has whetted grown-up appetites for such a production. Meanwhile, let it be said that the "Young Person's Guide" itself has, at last, produced a film that is fit for adult audiences.

³ This piece is available on Columbia records.

⁴ "New Statesman," 1st February, 1947.

THE BIRTH OF A NATION

A reply to Peter Noble's article in the Autumn SIGHT AND SOUND

by D. W. GRIFFITH and SEYMOUR STERN

Editor,
SIGHT AND SOUND

February 12, 1947.

Dear Mr. Dickinson,

My attention has been directed to Mr. Peter Noble's attack against myself and certain of my films (*The Birth of a Nation*, etc.) in the Autumn, 1946, issue of SIGHT AND SOUND. This attack charges me with having projected in these films bias against, and hatred of, the Negro race.

I have also read an advance copy of a reply which Mr. Seymour Stern, author of the Griffith Index and my biographer, has written to Mr. Noble refuting his charges. Mr. Stern informs me that this reply is scheduled for publication this Spring in SIGHT AND SOUND.

Mr. Stern has, I believe, presented the facts adequately and effectively. I have nothing to add to them, but for myself, I will take this occasion of Lincoln's birthday to request that you permit me to say just this:

I am not now and never have been "anti-Negro" or "anti" any other race. My attitude towards the Negroes has always been one of affection and brotherly feeling. I was partly raised by a lovable old Negress down in old Kentucky and I have always gotten along extremely well with the Negro people.

In filming "The Birth of a Nation", I gave to my best knowledge the proven facts, and presented the known truth, about the Reconstruction period in the American South. These facts are based on an overwhelming compilation of authentic evidence and testimony. My picturization of history as it happens requires, therefore, no apology, no defence, no "explanations". I regret that Mr. Noble, whose remarks do not appear to be based either on historic fact or personal experience, has made even this statement of the self-evident truth of my film necessary.

I consider that Mr. Stern is correct in the answers which he gives to the rest of Mr. Noble's remarks.

Beverly Hills,
California.

Very truly yours,
DAVID WARK GRIFFITH.

GRIFFITH NOT ANTI-NEGRO

By
SEYMOUR STERN

THE ATTACK BY PETER NOBLE against D. W. Griffith and, in particular, against two of Griffith's films—*The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *One Exciting Night* (1922), in the Autumn, 1946, issue of SIGHT AND SOUND, would not

deserve the attention of any serious, intelligent film student, and certainly would not merit a reply, had not Mr. Noble appointed himself a purveyor of "enlightenment" on this subject for members of the younger generation, who may not yet have seen either film.

Fearing that they may be permitted to view either or both of these works without prejudice, Mr. Noble has nobly undertaken to steer the "younger filmgoers" along what he considers the right path. His guidance consists in pouring out two pages of misinformation and slander, the equal of which has not been witnessed in print since those scarlet days before World War II, when the same kind of anti-Griffith libel issued periodically, and often in the identical phrases, from certain political publications in the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.

"Anti-Negro bias", "unsavoury significance", "racial intolerance", "vicious distortion", "strongly partisan attitude", "racial hatred", "sheer vicious distortion", "unbelievable viciousness", "unfair handling of a great theme", "great and incalculable harm", are but a few of the stock-in-trade adjectives and phrases which Mr. Noble hurls at the maker of what he elsewhere in the article describes as a "magnificent and impressive film . . . an epoch-making production of immense sweep and power", etc.

Mr. Noble's attack, the first one since the end of World War II, against the father of film art and the world's most celebrated motion picture, suggests that the time may have come to meet head-on those accusations and charges against Griffith and his masterpiece, which have so long flowed from certain sources, and of which Mr. Noble's gratuitous and ignoble contribution is merely the latest stereotype.

What are the facts? Is D. W. Griffith guilty of "anti-Negro bias, as demonstrated in that otherwise superb film *The Birth of a Nation* and in such of his later films as *One Exciting Night*" (quoting Mr. Noble)? Is he guilty of having "consciously maligned the Negro race"? Did he depict the Negroes and Negro politicians as "monstrous caricatures", as Mr. Noble charges?

The answer to each of these questions, emphatically is "No". Once and for all, here are the facts:

First, the historical events and scenes filmed in *The Birth of a Nation* are all based either on eyewitness accounts of actual happenings or on unimpeachable source-material. This material, cited by Griffith in sub-titles throughout the film, consists of excerpts from Nicolay and Hay's biography of Lincoln; documents and papers on file in the State legislature at Columbia, South Carolina; and, above all, from Woodrow Wilson's "History of the American People". Griffith, in introducing the action of the second

half of the film, quotes extensively from volume nine of this encyclopædic work, pp. 50, 59-65, 284 *et al.* The sub-title to which Mr. Noble takes exception, and which refers to the campaign and conspiracy to "crush the white South under the heel of the black South", is quoted directly from Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

The truth is, that with Wilson as his principal academic authority, Griffith depicts the history of the tragic and turbulent Reconstruction Period in the South with a degree of authenticity, documentation, objectivity and scholarship, seldom if ever equalled on the screen. What is more important, he carefully explains, and in the action itself makes it unmistakably clear, that the real villains of Southern history from 1865 to 1872 (the Reconstruction Period) were not the uneducated and newly-freed Negroes but the *doctrines* of certain fanatical and vengeful Northern whites, who duped the Negroes with glittering promises of wealth and power.

Historically, as well as on the screen, these white exploiters swarmed into the South, carrying with them the carpet bags or satchels from which they derived their nickname as a movement, and, by every known method of brutality, chicanery, deception, duplicity, falsehood, fraud and political hoax or trickery, organised the Negro vote in support of an economic, political and social revolution. The leader of the "carpet-baggers" is represented in the film as a white senator, the *Hon. Austin Stoneman*.

It is quite impossible to grasp the real significance or depth of Griffith's historical treatment in *The Birth of a Nation*, without first grasping the importance of the role played by this thinly fictionalised character. For *Stoneman* is not merely the personal "heavy" or villain of the story: he is the authentic and exact screen counterpart of one of the worst scoundrels of American history: Thaddeus Stevens.

THE VENGEANCE OF STEVENS

Stevens is known to every literate American as a kind of post-Civil War Benedict Arnold, a traitor to his civilisation and its government. He tried to establish in the devastated States south of the Mason and Dixon line a "Black Empire", of which he envisioned himself a godlike white master or overlord, and in which the white population would be reduced to an estate of regimented serfdom under hard-driving, vengeful black overseers, the former slaves.

Lincoln, however, had decided otherwise: he had avowedly intended to educate the millions of as yet illiterate and newly-freed Negroes and he had already served notice on Stevens and others of his ilk, that he would not treat the former Confederacy as a conquered province or its war-time leaders as outlaws; in short, Lincoln envisaged neither revolution nor vengeance for the South. So far as he, the Great Emancipator, was concerned, the American Civil War was ended.

But Stevens and his supporters would have none of this: they would have nothing less than vengeance and nothing short of the immediate overthrow of traditional civilisation in the South. They believed that the centuries-old differences between the black and the white races could be either wiped out overnight or, failing this, simply ignored. Stevens himself was dismissed at the time by

thinking people as an ambitious, egotistical and somewhat sadistic careerist; he probably would not be recalled to-day even in a footnote, had not Lincoln's untimely death given him his chance.

The reign of terror which swept the South in the wake of the assassination and which forms the basis of the second half of *The Birth of a Nation*, was launched by white men—by Thaddeus Stevens (*Stoneman*, in the film) and the "carpet-baggers". Of the ultimate judgment and opinion of these scoundrels by their successors in Congress, and by the people, Wilson wrote: "That handful of leaders . . . it was hard to acquit of the charge of knowing and intending the ruinous consequences of what they had planned" (*op. cit.*). Actually, this is a restrained, gentle judgment, tempered with far more mercy than Stevens and his carpet-bagger gang deserved. There was no crime, no outrage, on the calendar to which they did not resort in their sadistic and savage effort to crush and destroy the South. The Negroes, devoid of previous political experience and, therefore, easy prey for the Northern politicians, became unwitting but efficient pawns. As a result, the Southern whites, who now were living as modern "occupied" peoples, were forced to fight for their lives and to save the fragments of their civilisation by force of arms through "underground" means. The South was in reality an "occupied country", and the situation was similar to that of France or Norway in the 1940s. Naturally, "ugly passions" were aroused and these were the more inflamed in that underground organisations never are exactly lilywhite in behaviour or tactics, however necessary they may be to preserve life or ensure survival. The Southern underground was the *original* Ku Klux Klan or Invisible Empire, the "organisation which saved the South from anarchy and revolution" (sub-title, paraphrased from Wilson, *op. cit.*).

These are the known facts of this stormy and trying period of American history—facts which appear to have escaped Mr. Noble, but which form the warp and woof of the second half of *The Birth of a Nation*. I repeat: these facts, all of them based on actual happenings, may be found in Woodrow Wilson's "History of the American People" (IX, *loc. cit.*).

Similarly, the rise of the old Ku Klux Klan as filmed by Griffith is based on solid documentation; on the archival records of the founding of the Invisible Empire, in the private library of Thomas Dixon, Jr., author of "The Clansman"; on documents in the State libraries of South Carolina and Tennessee; Lester and Wilson's "The Ku Klux Klan" (cited also by Woodrow Wilson); and again on Wilson, *op. cit.* Much of the documentary material used by Griffith in filming the wild and stirring scenes of the Clansmen has since been more fully embodied in the standard work on this subject, Stanley F. Horn's "The Invisible Empire" (Houghton, Mifflin Literary Fellowship book, 1940).

In a word, all the major scenes and episodes of "The Birth of a Nation", especially those of the second half of the film, are solidly documented. It was Wilson himself, while President of the United States (in 1915), who praised the film for its authenticity, uttering the classic and oft-quoted comment: "It is like writing history with lightning, and my one regret is that it is all so terribly true". Is there not more than passing irony in the fact, that the President and statesman who paid *The Birth of a Nation* its first

important and most widely-quoted tribute, is the same Woodrow Wilson who has been hailed by the "liberals" of our own time as one of their own!

The plain fact is, that *The Birth of a Nation* does not malign the Negro. Why, then, do to-day's "liberals" continue to attack this mighty film and vilify its maker?

ANSWER

The answer may be found in the real target of Griffith's indictment, namely, the white Northerners and their ideology, an ideology which nowadays would be correctly identified as "totalitarian". *The Birth of a Nation* exposes the ideology and tactics of a revolutionary movement; it dramatises the defeat of this movement by a counter-revolution, the leaders and protagonists of which are the people themselves. This is the "partisan" sin of Griffith, the sin which the totalitarian "liberals" cannot forgive, cannot forget!

This is also the second but primary preoccupation of Mr. Noble, quite apart from the question of the film's truth. But in his zeal to enlighten the "younger filmgoers", he somehow omits to mention it by its true name.

He also omits to mention that there are Negroes portrayed in the film with affection, sympathy and warmth, with love (the "faithful souls"). Yet if Griffith were guilty of "anti-Negro bias" and "racial hatred", how could this characterisation be made of any Negro? In racial hatred, race is race, black is black, and there can be no exceptions. The fact that there are exceptions in Griffith's film—namely, all Negroes who reject the carpet-baggers' movement, clearly indicates, does it not, that Griffith's treatment of the historic facts is not racial, but ideological.

Mr. Noble, however, further omits to mention, that in the Museum of Modern Art Film Library 35mm. version of the picture now being circulated in England and elsewhere, the whole sequence with the important key-subtitle introducing *Gus, the renegade* (the Negro who chases Mae Marsh off the cliff) as a "product of vicious doctrines", is missing. Yet no print of *The Birth of a Nation* may be considered complete, much less authentic, in which this significant clarifying sub-title and the surrounding action fail to appear.

The doctrines referred to, specifically, are the ideological views of *Senator Stoneman* (Thaddeus Stevens), advocating intermarriage between blacks and whites, and postulating ultimate black supremacy. Stigmatised in Washington society for his open living with a mulatto mistress, *Stoneman* seeks to legalise the sexual relations between the races. *This is the principal immediate aim of his entire movement, as it was that of Stevens, whose own mistress also was a negress.* As a human product of *Stoneman's* Stevensonian doctrines, *Gus* represents a victimised Negro of a type familiar throughout the United States; he does not suspect that he is being used, so he runs amuck and brings tragedy down on himself and his people. With the above sub-title, all this is made clear—*Gus* is as much a victim of doctrine as the white girl whom he seeks to outrage; without the sub-title, *Gus* is almost the "monstrous caricature", which Mr. Noble accuses Griffith of having created.

Indeed, the charges and accusations which Mr. Noble brings against Griffith can best be evaluated by his assertion that *The Birth of a Nation* was banned in

California. Not only was the film never banned in California but it was first shown here. As stated in the Griffith Index, Part II, July, 1945, *The Birth of a Nation* opened under its original title (before the New York premiere) *The Clansman*, after the book by Thomas Dixon, Jr., on February 8, 1915, at Clune's (now the Philharmonic) Auditorium, Los Angeles, a house seating some 3,500 persons, where it ran at high prices for 22 weeks. I have myself witnessed it at least 16 times that I can recall in the past ten years and probably more than this, in Los Angeles and suburbs.

But the rubbish about its being banned in California is trifling compared with the astounding assertion that "Griffith, who had poured all his spirit into the film, was greatly influenced by the storm which followed its showing. It is said that he relented somewhat and three years later, in 1918, in *Hearts of the World*, he inserted a sequence showing a dying Negro soldier crying for his mother and a white comrade kissing him as he died".

There is no basis whatever for this stupidly false and arbitrary statement. It is obvious from his dishing up of this stuff purely as rumour or gossip ("It is said . . .") that Mr. Noble lifted it from the pages of Lewis Jacobs' "The Rise of the American Film", where it appeared along with other errors, falsehoods and fanciful misinterpretations of the American film in general and Griffith and his work in particular. By the way, this book, according to Professor Theodore Huff of the Motion Picture Division of New York University, contains over 200 *factual* errors, not counting ideological distortions or distorted "view-points" based on political motives.

Here again, for the information of Mr. Noble and other anti-Griffith mud-slingers, let these facts stand on the record: Mr. Griffith was at no time driven to remorse by the storm which followed the showing of *The Birth of a Nation*, as Mr. Noble, quoting Lewis Jacobs, naively suggests. Mr. Griffith never has "relented", never has tried to "make up" for anything, for the simple reason that he did not, and to this day does not, consider that he was or is guilty of the charges so maliciously imputed to him; therefore, he has nothing to relent about, nothing to "make up". The scene of the dying Negro soldier and his white "buddy" in the shell-hole did not appear in *Hearts of the World*, as the Messrs. Noble, Jacobs, *et al*, imagine, but in *The Greatest Thing in Life* (December, 1918). It was filmed not for the reasons which these slanderers and self-styled "historians" have concocted, but simply because the scenario called for it as a drama-worthy incident, an incident which actually had occurred on the Western Front. *The Greatest Thing in Life* was not based on the American Civil War, but on World War I. Griffith was, therefore, not faced in it with the problem of depicting the sad facts of the earlier relations between the races, as he did in the earlier work. So much then for *The Birth of a Nation*. . .

Now, to dispose of the second group of Mr. Noble's misleading remarks, those referring to the use of so-called "comedy-relief" in the person of the Negro servant, *Romeo Washington*, played by Porter Strong in the second film, *One Exciting Night*, there is this to be said:

Negroes had been used as "comedy relief" on the stage for over one hundred years and in American movies for over twenty years, before *One Exciting Night* was made. Negro buffoons or "comics" were featured in old Sennett, Christie and Hal Roach comedies and in other films and

WITHOUT COMMENT

again through the early "talkie" era—vide *Stepin Fetchit*, *Rochester*, etc. In fact, Negro "comedy relief", so called, more often than not with lovable overtones, has been, rightly or wrongly, one of the most popular and staple forms of American entertainment. Mr. Noble obviously would not know this.

Here are just a few of the key facts that Mr. Noble apparently does not know:

The Emperor Jones (1920), with Charles Gilpin, was about the first time that a Negro played a serious dramatic role, and this play, obscurely produced at the Provincetown Art Theatre, was not widely seen. Its fame and influence did not begin until years later.

Shuffle Along (1921) was the first coloured revue, and not until October, 1927, when *Porgy* appeared, did the American theatre witness the first real all-Negro play.

Then in November, 1930, in *Scarlet Sister Mary*, Ethel Barrymore, the first lady of the American stage, appeared in black-face. No one has since thought of accusing her or her producers of having been "anti-Negro" or of having racially disdained to use real Negro players.

Uncle Tom's Cabin was revived in May, 1933, by the Players' Club, with Otis Skinner and other white players taking the principal roles in black-face. Again, there have never been any charges, then or now, of racial prejudice.

When *Hallelujah* and *Hearts in Dixie*, two early 1929 talking films appeared, they were considered extreme novelties, and their being "all-coloured" films was the central fact about them exploited in the advertising and publicity campaigns.

As for "black-face", does not Hollywood to-day still have Occidentals portray Orientals? Is there not the classic example of *The Good Earth* in which Paul Muni (Russian-Jewish) and Luise Rainer (Viennese), are made up with fish skin pulling their eyes a-slant? Or the more recent example of *Dragon Seed*, with Katherine Hepburn, Walter Huston, Aline MacMahon, Hurd Hatfield, Turban Bey (a Turk), all trying hard, and failing, to look Chinese? Is this because M.G.M. hates the Chinese . . . ?

Thus, here again, in the light of the facts, and being unfamiliar with American customs, Mr. Noble has gone out of his way to malign, to propagandize, to slander, to vilify. . . .

As an actor in Clifford Odets' agitational plays, and more recently as an enthusiastic glorifier and publicist of J. Arthur Rank, Mr. Peter Noble is undoubtedly familiar with the techniques and tricks of propaganda. However, he treads dangerously close to libel, when he blackens D. W. Griffith as a "pioneer of prejudice" or makes him out as the persecutor of the Negro race. In this, he is, of course, merely echoing in strangely familiar accents and phrases the astounding falsehoods and unbelievable nonsense on this subject which already have poured in volume from the presses of the N.Y. "Daily Worker", the "New Masses", the defunct "Friday" and "New Theatre", or from such specious and shockingly misleading politico-economic tracts as "The Rise of the American Film."

We do not know Mr. Noble personally, but we are quite sure that he has been misinformed about a great many things. We are also quite sure that he has written with the best intentions. We doubt not that he will thank us for bringing to his attention some facts of which he has apparently not been cognisant. And we suggest, most

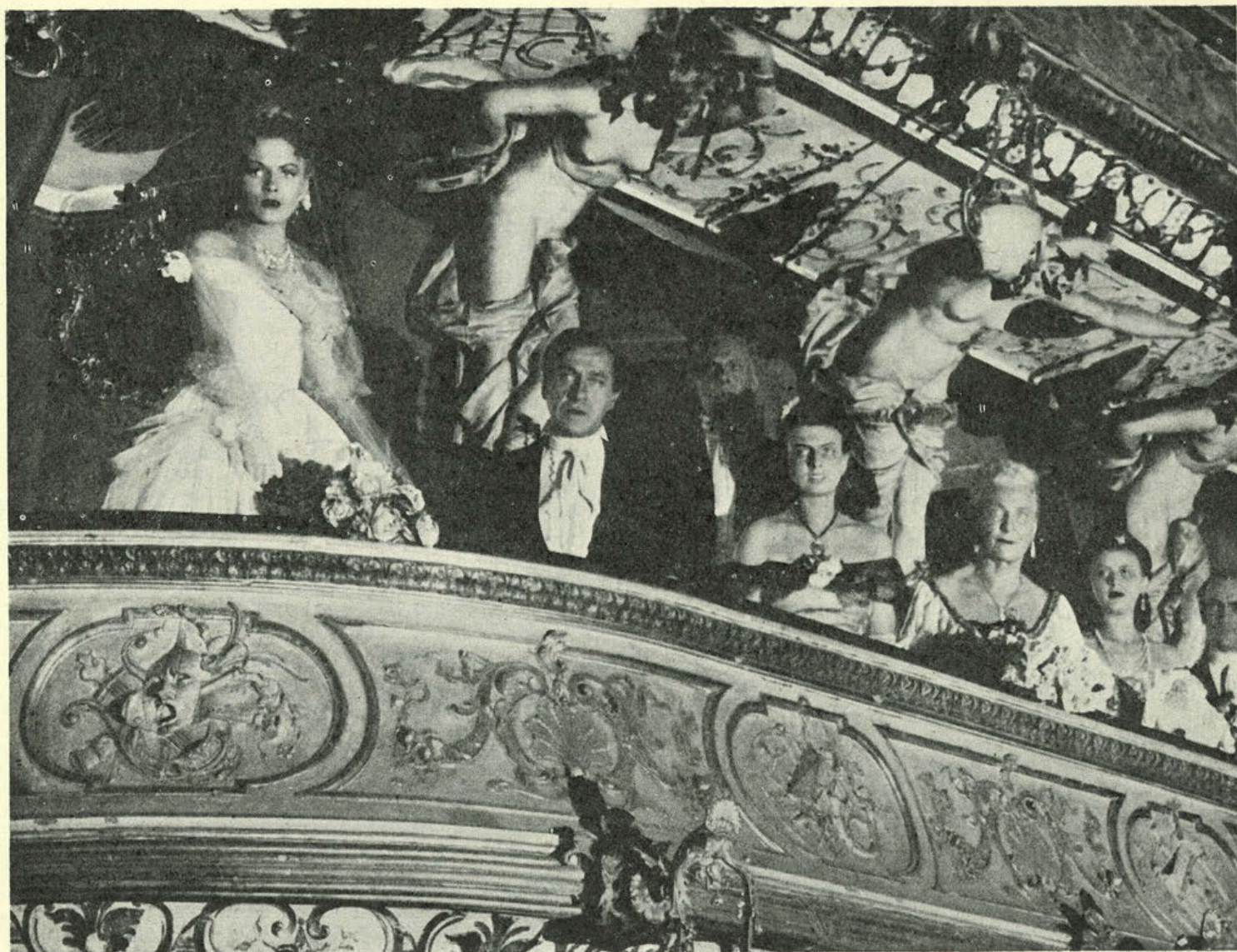
"It is by our own decision that D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* will not appear in this cycle. Fully aware of the greatness of the film and of its artistic and historic importance, we have also had sufficient and repeated evidence of the potency of the anti-Negro bias and believe that exhibiting it at this time of heightened social tensions cannot be justified." (Page 3, *Introductory Note to a pamphlet issued by the Museum of Modern Art, containing the programme of a season entitled "The History of The Motion Picture, 1895-46"*).

respectfully, that Mr. Noble read a little American history of the non-"social", non-guesswork school, before he indulges in further attacks or propaganda on this subject.

Does he think Mr. Griffith started the Civil War, too? Or started the traditional attitude of the South—yes, and at bottom, of all the rest of America, toward the Negro? Does Mr. Noble realise also the fact that in Washington, D.C., the United States capital, Negroes are not allowed to attend white theatres? Is he so dense that he cannot draw any conclusions from the fact, that although more than eighty years have passed since the American Civil War ended, the elected representatives of the American people have to this day not seen fit to pass a Federal anti-lynching bill?

All democratic Americans, including the writer, desire that such a bill be passed, as soon as possible and with teeth in it, to protect not only the Negro but other minority groups as well, including political ones, from mob rule. Did Griffith pioneer such customs or prejudices, too? Yet, when *The Birth of a Nation* first appeared, and during the twenty-five years of its fabulous revivals since then, one hundred million Americans needed no urging to see it. As its fame grew, the mere announcement of its exhibition at local theatres was sufficient, without further advertising or publicity, to cause a box-office sell-out. Surely Mr. Noble cannot but know that films do not start attitudes or trends in political or social relations; they merely reflect them.

In conclusion, we who admire and revere Mr. Griffith—not as "one of the great poetic minds of the cinema", as Mr. Noble so coyly puts it, but as the creative master of the screen, the father of the art and probably the outstanding artistic genius which America has so far produced—we do not think of him, to use Mr. Noble's ignoble term, as an "idol". We do not view him in this cold and inhuman light. Rather, we see him as entirely human, like ourselves—a man of flesh and blood who has his faults and who, like ourselves and Mr. Noble, has made mistakes, but who, unlike ourselves and Mr. Noble, is rarely gifted. And for this reason, we do not in the least mind that he has, again like Mr. Noble and ourselves, "feet of clay". On the contrary, it is all too clear to us, that what really annoys his critics and traducers is the fact that Griffith in his films fails to reflect the Stalinist ideologies of our day which pass for "liberalism". This is evidently the real grievance, at bottom the only one which, to-day, the same as yesterday, motivates the slanderous attacks that continue to issue and have issued through the years, against the screen's first master, the maker of *Intolerance* and *The Birth of a Nation* and *Broken Blossoms* and *America*, from certain political gossip-dens and lie-factories.



Music in Dreams

A Czechoslovak Film

THE CONTINENTAL SEASON

The stills illustrating this article by ROGER MANVELL are taken from films shown at the Czechoslovak Film Festival organised by the British Film Institute in London and Scotland in May

THE CONTINENTAL SEASON has been thin, owing partly to the long runs which the major films *Les Enfants du Paradis* and *La Symphonie Pastorale* have enjoyed. The Everyman in Hampstead continues to show many of the older films such as *The Testament of Doctor Mabuse* and *Sous les Toits de Paris*, and proves that it is possible to run ostensibly film society programmes on a continuous commercial basis in areas where a solid public backing for such enterprise exists. The Everyman is a light in the window of the future, for there should be such small cinemas in every large area, developing the single film society audience into the multiple audiences of the general public necessary to support a permanent cinema. The large foreign public in London and the great number of people there with

Continental connections or interests have made a boom for Continental pictures in the established London cinemas which present such specialised programmes: it remains now to make this boom spread to the provinces.

The danger of this popularisation of foreign pictures is that an increasing number of bad or mediocre films will be brought over to Britain and will disillusion those who are learning to like the foreign product. Whereas a programme-picture like *Domino* will give entertainment to everyone in a light mood, a film like *Behold Beatrice* can do but little harm. This concerns the amorous obsession of a wealthy bachelor for his beautiful adolescent ward. He keeps her away as much as possible from the society of young men of her own age, and when at length one of them falls in

love with her he pretends to him that the girl is his mistress. Finally he persuades her to consent to marry him, but gives her up to the younger man when he perceives her genuine distress.

The only way for such material to become acceptable is for the psychological aspect of the situation to be developed with sympathy. Here *Behold Beatrice* is in very marked contrast to *La Symphonie Pastorale*, which after all has a remarkably similar theme but a totally different treatment. Both films have the advantage of skilled artistes. In *Behold Beatrice*, the guardian is played by Fernand Ledoux with his engrossed and melancholic countenance. But owing to the poverty of the script, which makes no more of the situation than sentimental melodrama, he seems able to develop his characterisation no further than a surface interpretation the plot requires. The result is a merely repellant story without depth or significance. The process of *Linguasynchrone*, a skilful enough lip-synchronisation technique used for dubbing this film into English, does not seem able to obviate the effect which all dubbed voices produce, that one is listening to a number of ventriloquist acts, the dolls being the artistes moving on the screen. The human voice is not a word-sounding machine. It is part of the human personality. By tempo, intonation and vocal qualities it belongs to the individual speaker. To cut it off and replace it by the voice of another person, whether the speech be in a foreign tongue or not, is to remove a substantial part of the life-force from an artiste's performance. The correct way to deal with the foreign film is to title it as briefly as is necessary to convey what is happening in the dialogue. Continental audiences of

all classes accept this convention. Why should British audiences so resolutely refuse the titled film outside the specialised cinemas?

Domino is a somewhat theatrical farce about a destitute young man who is hired by a wealthy art dealer's wife to cover her liaison with an artist by decoying her husband's jealousy towards himself. This is a good stock situation in the traditional style of witty French comedy: it requires polish, wit and rhetoric to place it. The admirable cast, headed by Fernand Gravey as the decoy and Simone Renant as the wife, have these qualities. *Domino*, within its strict and quite shallow limits is a great success, not less because it allows an assortment of curious characters to wander in and out of the film after the style of René Clair. Even so, this remains a piece of stage technique in a sound tradition of light, satirical entertainment.

In *The Vow*, the prize-winning film about the public career of Stalin, there is a brief moment set in pre-war France when the Russians mock with theatrical scorn the then French Foreign Minister. But for its deadly political implications, the sequence is not unlike *Domino*, technically speaking. The Foreign Minister, fox-faced, talks on the phone to his mistress and to "Monsieur Chamberlain" while he keeps the Russian delegates waiting. He is last seen dancing with up-raised wagging finger while the tanks of Germany stream over the fields of Russia. This is the only non-realistic section of an otherwise serious and sometimes moving film. Russian ideological films have seldom been as good as *The Vow*, for the simple reason that humanity, gay, warm, quarrelling



The Stolen Frontier

A Czechoslovak Film Directed by Jiri Weiss



The Adventurous Student

A Czechoslovak Film

and angry, is too often replaced by the rather stodgy speech-makers and the over-zealous industrial record-breakers who, even though they may well exist, stand for political respectability rather than for human appeal. In *The Vow*, Stalin is always human even while he seems aloof. The best propaganda in the world is human propaganda, and the film is an admirable medium for conveying the stuff of a people's heart and character. Britain will learn more of Russia from the human films than from the mainly ideological ones.

A French revival of interest was Duvivier's *Poil de Carotte*, originally made in 1932. It is about a small boy, a late and unwanted child, who is neglected by his father, despised by his elder brother and sister, and unmercifully bullied by his mother. It contains a superb child performance as the boy by Robert Lynen, who grew up to die in the resistance movement, while Harry Baur, the great actor who plays the father in this film, was killed in a German prison camp.

La Symphonie Pastorale has had much written about it since its appearance in London. Adapted from a story by André Gide, the film is directed by Jean Delannoy and features Michele Morgan as the blind girl Gertrude and

Pierre Blanchar as the stern Pastor who adopts her into his family and whose passion for her grows in him without his understanding the dangers it represents. The film has been criticised as psychologically false, a melodrama, not a drama of passion. The love affair is certainly pathological; the blind girl creates an imaginary man to love out of the Pastor's kindness and devotion. His peculiarity lies in the absence of recognition that this devotion is really passion: seeing that he is married and a father, this may seem strange except that a man of his temperament and piety might well so deceive himself. Whatever the views of the critic may be on this point, the film itself has two superb performances from Pierre Blanchar and Michele Morgan, and a hardly less good performance from Line Moro as the Pastor's wife Amelie. The narrow circle of the house in the Swiss mountain snows, the hard sunlight which shows the pure impersonality of nature in the face of the twisted temperament of humanity, the clean and airy church which is the centre of the Pastor's life until love supersedes the ways of Puritanism, all these eminently filmic qualities frame the sympathetic and detailed acting of the central characters and make the film memorable.

BRITISH FILMS OF THE QUARTER

By

ARTHUR VESSELO

THERE IS A SCHOOL of dogma which, starting from a vigorous affirmation of the cinema as an independent art, will deny all possibility of virtue to any film based on famous literature. This is a distinctly exaggerated viewpoint; but it must be admitted to carry some weight as against the opposite, popular attitude, which holds, or appears to hold, that the highest achievement of a film is to mirror ingeniously the characters and incidents of a beloved book.

The conscientious critic who tries to dissociate himself from both these extremes of prejudgment will still find himself in a pretty dilemma when faced with a concrete example. Either he has read and digested the book, in which case his memory of it must inevitably interfere with his power to criticise the film as a film in its own right; or he has not read the book and is immune from its reputation, in which case he cannot take proper account of what the film-maker is chiefly aiming at. The answer lies perhaps in a compromise: to surrender to the principle that a film based on a world-famous book cannot easily have any independent existence as a film; and from that point on to judge it in the main for what it is primarily trying to be—a faithful visualisation of the leading passages of its original, nothing more.

Even this solution, one must confess, is not watertight; but where the original work is genuinely an accepted classic, of long standing, there seems no other way. The ultimate criterion is how far the film can divorce itself in the mind from the book. If the divorce can be made complete, the derivation need not be much considered; but if the book calls up dynamic and undisplaceable images of its own, if it has, in fact, become a part of one's intellectual and cultural existence, then the best that the film can ever be is a splendid wraith.

Film versions of Dickens novels fall undeniably into the second category. Both *Great Expectations* and *Nicholas Nickleby* are extremely craftsmanlike adaptations; but at no moment can one readily forget their prototypes. If, by a wrench, one does succeed for a little while in putting the novels themselves out of mind, one becomes quickly aware of heavy, melodramatic over-emphases, of out-moded mannerisms of plot-construction, which, traditional in Dickens and in place on his huge and crowded nineteenth-century canvases, stand out queerly against the compacter, more naturalistic background of a modern film.

ESSENTIAL FAULTS

With both stories the problems of transcription must have been tremendous. To preserve the richness of Dickensian plot and characterisation, and at the same time to water down the melodrama, to soften the coincidence, to limit the action to what the screen can bear, and to maintain continuity, are exercises to break the back of an enthusiast. They are useful exercises in self-discipline:

perhaps that is their chief virtue. They are never simply a matter of elimination of weaknesses; for in Dickens the weaknesses and the strengths are inextricably tied up with one another. If one were to remove all his faults, there would be nothing much left.

The best quality that emerges from the film of *Great Expectations* is a quality of atmosphere. The desolate marshlands, the reconstructed lawyer's London of over a century ago, with its harsh and barbarous survivals, the sense of continuing struggle against semi-pagan fates, are impressively presented. Indeed, so starkly direct are some of the passages—Pip's first encounter with the convict (brought home with a shock to lift you out of your seat), the terrible scenes of judgment and execution, and the old woman's horrific death by fire—that it is hard indeed to understand the confused outcry against the Censor's "A" certificate.

The atmosphere, then, is strongly conveyed—though with some occasional inadequacies—and the characterisation, too, is for the most part appropriate and well-defined. As a translative re-embodiment, the film fulfils its purpose admirably, despite lapses. Even so, subtract the novel, and what remains is a walking ghost.

The deficiencies are just one degree more obvious in *Nicholas Nickleby*. This film, hammered together with nice professional skill, sweeps up odd persons and startling events with the speed and the certainty of an express train sweeping up the stations—now here, now gone into the night. It attempts to overcome melodrama by a measure of rapid and allusive understatement, reserving its principal alarms and excursions for the stormy climax of Ralph Nickleby's suicide. The attention is very well held. None the less, the method succeeds only up to a point. The theme, after all, like that of *Great Expectations*, like that of *David Copperfield*, is in basis the theme of humanity, incarnate chiefly in the hero, battling a way among demons—evil demons, benevolent demons, comic demons—to eventual salvation. Yet the arch-demon, and this is symptomatic, is portrayed by that correct and gentlemanly actor, Sir Cedric Hardwicke. Nothing less like a wicked uncle could well be imagined. For doom and damnation, substitute the raised eyebrow. One appreciates the difficulty; but a possible answer might be, not to make a film of *Nicholas Nickleby*.

Dickensian *tours-de-force*, however, are by no means the only British contributions of the quarter. Most of the others—all, indeed, which are worth considering—are of contemporary life, with a war-time or post-war background. One of them, the official film, *School for Danger*, deals directly with certain factual aspects of the war itself. The present reviewer can do no more than mention this film in passing, for his connection with the producing organisation is too close for him to express a critical opinion.



Dead among the living

A Czechoslovak Film

Also with a war-time setting, and with an accidental resemblance of title, but totally different otherwise, is *Green for Danger*, a light piece of detective fiction about murder in a rural hospital in Kent under the menace of the flying bombs. Amid obscure suspicions, hostilities and intrigues of an accustomed kind, there stalks, and frequently stumbles, a comic sleuth, the egregious Alastair Sim. Apart from some minor originalities in the setting, the film attempts few real novelties of approach, and ranks in sum as an honest and competent pot-boiler. Its melodramatic excursions, one may note, are as conventional as those of Dickens, but in twentieth instead of nineteenth century style.

Alastair Sim appears again in *Hue and Cry*, but in a disappointingly abbreviated role. This whole film is something of a disappointment; not because the ideas behind it are not bright and stimulating, but because their development is incomplete. Comparison with such an obviously kindred effort as *Emil and the Detectives* favours the earlier film, not the later.

Hue and Cry has importance, whatever its final effect, because of the freshness of its conception and the excellence of its basic aims. Authentic children's adventure-stories are too great a rarity on the screen for one not to applaud every respectable example of the type. What is wrong is that the genesis of the film is too apparent. A thieves' code com-

municated in a twopenny dreadful; high adventure among the London bomb-sites; a gang of children tracking down a gang of crooks; and a moment of grand excitement when, at a given signal, the youth of London swarms from every corner to the attack: these are the elements excogitated by the script writers' conference—elements magnificent in possibility but still requiring to be properly knit together, a requirement which is never fulfilled. The picture is all too clearly a simple build-up for a few premeditated and resounding ingenuities; and the incidental items in the build-up, having superficially served their turn, tend to be separately shrugged off or forgotten (as Alastair Sim is forgotten), to the detriment of the unity, the logic, and the force of the film as a connected entity.

BEST AND MOST GENUINE

There is a curious echo of *Hue and Cry* in Carol Reed's *Odd Man Out*. Here, too, there are gangs of children playing in the streets amid the dilapidated relics of war; but here the children are grim, ragged urchins and they play grim games with sinister significances. In their way, these urchins are as demonic as any creatures of a Dickens novel; and like a demonic chorus they run shrieking and laughing through the film. They are not alone in their demonry: other grotesques crowd about the central figure as he staggers, hunted, dazed, and dying, from one hopeless resting place to the next; and this time the demons are not only about him but in his own tormented soul. Humanity, or a part of it, has in him become introvert and desperate, fighting to the last ditch with an awful courage for a lost and perhaps useless cause.

That is not to say that the piece is pure existentialist pessimism. It is, rather, a portrayal of a passage in the long battle (observed and commented upon by the Greek tragedians) between conflicting and unintegrated rights—between majorities and minorities, between law and the rebel. Whatever it is, *Odd Man Out* is the best and most genuine film of the quarter. In it the dramatic intensity which we associate with Hitchcock has been given solidity and meaning by something more than a touch of the tragic poetry which we associate with the Irish playwrights. If now and then a slight over-literary flavour creeps in, this is a negligible fault in the total pattern, a pattern fashioned with accuracy and imagination to fit the resources of the film as a medium.

Into a single afternoon and evening of rain, snow and grime are condensed all the events of the plot, whose symbolic account of man's pursuit by furies is unfolded amid scenes familiar to every dweller in a populous, industrial city. Clanging trams, dance halls, docks, air-raid shelters, public house bars, the cluttered wreckage of the back yards become instruments of destiny, and time itself becomes an actor, in the great clock telling off the relentless hours from its tower until the last close-up at midnight.

Odd Man Out is a sign that our native cinema is reaching maturity. Not the only sign, it is yet among the most complete and certain signs to date, and it is weighty with promise for the future.



The Best Years Of Our Lives

Goldwyn—RKO Radio

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

The new Books and Periodicals

The Factual Film: A Survey by the Arts Enquiry, sponsored by the Dartington Hall Trustees. Published on behalf of the Arts Enquiry by Political and Economic Planning. (Oxford University Press, 1947, 12s. 6d.).

This is the second of four reports to be presented by the Dartington Hall Trustees on the Visual Arts, the Factual Film and Music and the Theatre. The series is designed to give some account of the place of these arts in our national life, their economic and administrative background, their social importance and their value in general education. The survey, which covers the ground up to the late summer of 1945, is primarily concerned with the use of the film as a medium for purposes other than entertainment. It gives an account of the development of the documentary film, the use of the film in education and record and news films. There are chapters on the film and the public and the international use of factual films. The work is preceded by a general survey and conclusions and followed by appendices on the develop-

ment, structure and economics of the British feature film, film censorship in Great Britain, the education film movement in Scotland and the National Film Board of Canada.

The Film in France, by Roy Fowler. (Pendulum Publications, 1946. 2s.).

This little book is an extremely good two-shillingsworth. It is, we believe, the only book so far published in England on the French film. It gives a fairly detailed account of what was happening in the cinema world in France during and since the war, with a description and criticism of each film. There is a useful list of films, made from 1940-46, classified under directors, and it is profusely illustrated with stills. The style is rather involved and some of the sentences have to be read more than once to grasp the meaning.

Twenty Years of British Film, 1925-45, by Michael Balcon, Ernest Lindgren, Forsyth Hardy and Roger Manvell. (Falcon Press, 1947. 10s. 6d.).

This book is a survey of the British film during the past twenty years. It is a

well produced volume, printed throughout on art paper and containing over a hundred carefully chosen stills. The introduction is by Michael Balcon, British film producer and director. Ernest Lindgren, curator of the National Film Library, writes on the early feature film. Forsyth Hardy, editor of the book. Grierson, on Documentary, has a section on the British documentary film and Roger Manvell, author of the Penguin book, *Film*, on the British feature film from 1925 to 1945.

Nature and My Cine Camera, by Oliver G. Pike. (Focal Press, 1946. 15s.).

This is a companion volume to *Nature and Camera*, published in 1943. It is a well-produced book, beautifully illustrated as far as possible by stills from the author's films. It gives an enthralling account of various kinds of wild life and the difficulties with which the author had to contend. It is of much general interest but contains a good deal of technical information also.

Making the Movies, by Jeanne Bendick, directed by Robert Bendick. (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1945.)

This book gives an account of the activities involved in the making of motion pictures and is illustrated by the author with rather facetious marginal drawings. The language is simple and printed in large clear type and the book would be suitable as well for adults. The book contains a certain amount of motion picture history and there is a useful glossary of movie terms at the end.

Informal Education: Adventures and Reflections, by J. Macalister Brew. (Faber, 1946. 10s. 6d.)

"The plan of this book is designed to show how people of all ages can be guided and taught both consciously and unconsciously to develop their own personalities through the right use of the eyes and ears, general faculties and emotions". Two chapters are devoted to the approach through the eyes. The first deals with posters and broadsheets, wall newspapers, exhibition boxes, logbooks and pictures and painting, the second with mechanical aids, the lantern, the film strip, educational films, documentaries, the commercial film and film groups.

The Screen Writer. (Published monthly at 1655, North Cherokee, Hollywood 28, California. 25 cents per copy. Canada and foreign: 30 cents.)

This periodical is intended for those who write for the screen or are interested in writing or films generally. It has, one would say, a strongly American standpoint.

The Third Cinematograph Films Act: Memorandum to the President of the Board of Trade from the Film Industry Employees' Council. (Film Industry Employees' Council, 1947.)

This memorandum, with which the Association of Cine Technicians, the Electrical Trades Union, the Film Artists' Association, the Musicians' Union, the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees and the British Actors' Equity Association are associated, makes various proposals for the composition of a third Act to succeed that of 1938. These include the establishment of a Films Council to foster films in the same way as the Arts Council fosters the British theatre and to be representative of all the necessary interests, including the Government, film producers and Trade Unions.

Film Miscellany, Winter, 1946-47, edited by Peter Noble. (Pendulum Publications, 1947. 2s.)

This paper-backed review contains a large number of short topical articles, which deal with outstanding films and film actors, and several reproductions of stills and other photographs.

Gone to the Pictures, by Hilda Lewis. (Jarrold, 1946. 7s. 6d.)

This novel is very readable as light literature and written by someone who has evidently always been interested in the cinema and has a knowledge of its history and inner workings. The book should appeal particularly to those with a similar interest.

The Place of the Film in Medical Education: Report of a joint meeting of the Scientific Film Association and

the Royal Society of Medicine, held on the 26th February, 1946, at the premises of the Royal Society of Medicine. (Scientific Film Association, 1946. 1s.)

This pamphlet contains lectures on the principles of teaching by film, by G. Patrick Meredith, on the utilization and evaluation of training films in the Royal Navy, by A. C. Izod, on the practice of teaching by film, by Edward Hindle, and on the production and use of films for teaching, by H. R. Hewer. It also includes a list of subjects on which films are desired by teachers of medicine and a list of child health subjects on which films are also desired by them.

Expressionismus und Film, by Rudolf Kurtz. (Berlin, Verlag der Lichtbildbühne, 1946.)

A copy of this interesting book is now in the Reference Section of the Library of the British Film Institute. It is beautifully illustrated both in black and white and colour, with a pre-war absence of austerity, and should be of interest to many students of the cinema.

Der Film, Wirtschaftlich, Gesellschaftlich, Künstlerisch, by Georg Schmidt, Werner Schmalenbach and Peter Bächlin, published by the Schweizerische Filmarchiv, Basel. (Basel, Holbein-Verlag, 1947.)

The object of this book is to show what influence the economic position of the film has upon its artistic form and social function, what the film could become artistically and socially, what it actually is today and, above all, why it is so. It is the outcome of the Film Exhibition, held by the Gewerbemuseum in Basel in October, 1943. It is both a book of illustrations (it contains over 160), and a theoretical treatise. It is a beautifully produced book and the lavish use of good paper shows that the Swiss are not suffering from the same shortage that we are. The stills are excellent, but, although all are perfectly clear, some seem unnecessarily small, being not much bigger than a postage stamp and surrounded by inches of white paper.

Okay for Sound: How the Screen Found its Voice, edited by Frederic Thrasher. (New York, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946.)

This book is "the first attempt to deal specifically and pictorially with the application of sound to the moving film". It is a large volume and traces, chiefly by means of full-page illustrations, the background history of the motion picture, with special emphasis on the part played by the Warner Brothers in the development of the sound film. The illustrations are rather blurred.

Cinquantenaire du Cinema, 28 decembre, 1895-28 decembre 1945, published by Prisma for the Syndicats professionnels de l'Industrie Cinematographique.

This brochure is a report of the ceremony held on 28th December, 1945, to commemorate the fifty years of cinema. It includes a lecture on the inventors of the cinema, by Georges Sadoul, and addresses by various other French authorities. The proceeds from the sale of this memorial are to be presented to the doyens of the French cinema as a token of recognition.

Films for Church and Youth

A booklet under the above title has been published by the Edinburgh House Bureau for Visual Aids (1s. 6d., by post 1s. 7½d., from Edinburgh House Press, 2, Eaton Gate, London, S.W.1). It contains a useful selected list of some 200 films recommended for youth clubs and church discussion groups, together with synopses. In general, the films deal with social matters, citizenship and life overseas.

Sequence One

Among the more ambitious Film Society publications is "Sequence", the first number of which was published in January. This contains, among others, interesting articles on the "Cinema of Marcel Carné", by J. F. Lodge; the "Czechoslovak Film Industry," by Peter Tempest, and a selection of stills from recent films. (Oxford University Film Society, 1s.)

"Visual Education Digest"

A comprehensive summary of the present state of visual education has been published by Messrs. British Instructional Films, Ltd., under the above title. It should be very useful as preliminary guidance to teachers interested in, but knowing nothing about, the film in school.

THE FILM SOCIETIES

The Planet Film Society

The Film Appreciation Section continues to meet on the last Sunday of each month at The Green Dragon, Winchmore Hill, N.21. Programmes have included *Carmen*, *Film and Reality* (Part 4), *Divide and Conquer*, *La Bete Humaine*, *The Story of Penicillin*, and the sound version of the new Gateway Film Productions' history-teaching film in 16mm. Kodachrome, *Georgian Background*.

The Film Production Section is adding to the footage of its new film about the Society, *Let's Begin Again*, by shooting at regular fortnightly intervals. Tests have already been made for recording a commentary on discs.

On Sunday, May 11th, the first post-war revival of the Society's annual film competition is to be organised, and the Planet Trophy will be awarded to the member or members submitting the best film (by popular vote) made since the competition was last held in 1939. Films may be on any gauge and of any length.

The Society has recently published a list of five pre-war film productions (on 9.5mm. and 16mm.) which are available to other societies. Full details may be obtained from the Secretary, Miss Hilda Collins, "Beam Ends", Belmont Avenue, Cockfosters, Herts.

Norwich Film Society

Owing to electricity cuts and impassable roads we were unable to show the following films that had been booked for the Eighth Session: *Warning Shadows*, *Out of Chaos*, *Little Red Riding Hood*. In connection with the Society's showing of *My Universities* the Workers' Educational Association held a 'one-day school' at which lectures were given by Alan Moray Williams on the life, work and influence of Maxim Gorki.

The programmes of the Ninth Session will be as follows: April 20th: *Une Femme Disparait*, *Abu's Poisoned Well*; May 18th: *Ivan the Terrible*, *Zviratka a Petrovsti*, *Edvard Grieg*; June 15th: *L'Eternel Retour*, *The Tocher*. The Workers' Educational Association is arranging lectures on the French tradition in acting, Ivan the Terrible, and the arts in France during the Occupation.

Dagenham Co-operative Film Society

This Society, now four months old, has over 100 members. Meetings, by request, are fortnightly, to allow of further discussion and study of film appreciation. Films in the annotated programmes already published include: *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Steel*, *The Champion*, *Cyprus is an Island*, *This is Colour*, *The Italian Straw Hat* and *Land of Promise*, which was introduced by its associate director, Mr. Francis Gysin. The Mayor (Ald. W. E. Bellamy, J.P.), the Mayoress (Mrs. Bellamy), the Deputy Mayoress (Coun. Mrs. A. R. Thomas), and members of the Council attended this first performance in the district.

A 16 mm. production unit has been formed, and, with help from youth leaders and teachers and others, has started work on a film (in Kodachrome) on the activities of Dagenham children.

The Honorary Secretary would be very pleased to exchange programmes and notes with others. His address is: Valence House, Becontree Avenue, Dagenham.

Edinburgh Film Guild held the closing performance of its seventeenth season on March 9, when a special musical programme was shown, *Battle for Music* and *Symphonie Fantastique*. Both films had a particular interest in relation to the International Musical Festival to be held in Edinburgh during the summer. Other feature films shown throughout the season have been *Une Femme Disparait*, *Frenzy*, *Land of Promise*, *Fric-Frac*, *Ivan the Terrible*, *Love Eternal*, *Le Grand Jeu*, *Day of Wrath*, *Les Visiteurs du Soir*, *Portrait of Maria* and *Children of the Soviet Arctic*. Membership for the season stood at over 2,000 with a waiting list.

The supplementary festival of famous films shown in the Gateway was also successful. The programmes included such films as *The Birth of a Nation*, *The Last Laugh*, *Thy Soul shall Bear Witness*, *Berlin*, *Blackmail*, *M*, *The Gold Rush*, *Le Quatorze Juillet*, *Mädchen in Uniform* and *Sous les Toits de Paris*. Film production in Scotland was represented by a special performance at the Gateway, when the following new Scottish Office films were shown: *Seed of Prosperity*, *Birth Day*, *Good Neighbours*, *Fair Rent*, *The Glen is Ours* and *North-East Corner*.

After a long delay, reconstruction is now proceeding at the Guild's new offices at Film House, and the completed premises, including the theatre, should be ready for opening before the commencement of the eighteenth season in October.

Oldham Repertory Cinema Club.

The Club's second season is now in progress at the Cosy Cinema, Bridge Street, Oldham, on Tuesdays, at 7.30 p.m. A special Spring membership at one guinea has been introduced to cover the 12 weekly programmes. Films chosen are: *L'Idée*, *Kameradschaft*, *Princess Kaguya*, *Hostages*, *L'Atalante*, *Marie Louise*, *Hortobagy*, *Zéro de Conduite*, *Une Femme Disparait*, *Dood Wasser*, *Veille D'Armes*, *Legions D'Honneur*, *Les Gens du Voyage*, *Land of Promise*, *The Beginners of History* and *The Gay Parisian*. In addition there is a carefully selected supporting programme of experimental and documentary films.

The Club also tours local Youth Clubs with a mobile 16-mm. film unit, giving free propaganda shows, with a view to ensuring a membership for the coming seasons. A further B.B.C. programme is in preparation, but the date is not yet fixed.

Commencing April, 1947, the "Motion Picture Journal", containing full details of the Club's activities, will be on sale each month on the bookstalls. The subscription list has been closed, owing to the paper shortage, at 10,000, but orders may be placed through the trade.

Will Secretaries please note the three addresses of Club activity?

General Secretary: 36, Shawhall Bank Rd., Greenfield, Nr. Oldham.

Membership and Accounts, and Mobile Film Unit: c/o Education Offices, Union Street West, Oldham.

"Motion Picture Journal" Editorial and Advertising Office: 268, Ripponden Rd., Oldham.

Exeter Cinema Society

The Exeter Cinema Society was formed in October, 1946, and under the guidance of an energetic committee has developed into a progressive society.

The opening meeting was held on October 24th, when the membership stood at 128. Now, after four months, the total membership is 254 and it has been decided to extend the season to the end of May instead of March.

The initial season has been made up with the showing of the following films—all on 16 mm. sub-standard: *Man of Aran*, *The Blue Angel*, *White Hell of Pitz Palu*, *40,000 Horsemen*, *Le Bete Humaine*, *A Night at the Opera*, *Henry V*, *49th Parallel*, *The Last Chance*, *An Italian Straw Hat*, *Cyprus is an Island* and *A Harbour went to France*. To date three lectures have been given; Francesca Enns gave a very interesting talk on *The Blue Angel* and its relationship to the book, Douglas Wolfe on his experiences as a cameraman and John Terry (Business Manager, Greenpark Productions) gave many interesting details of the Documentary World.

A long battle for a cinema is now reaching a climax and it is hoped, during the 1947/48 Season, to run both 35 mm. and 16 mm. centres in the city. Greater support will of course be needed, and

subscriptions, which are now exceedingly low, will have to be raised to meet this more ambitious programme.

A magazine—"Cinema Study"—incorporating articles of interest and technical details of the season's films has been issued and received as an example of things to come.

The Honorary Secretary, Mr. Eric Keen, 6, College Road, Exeter, will be pleased to forward particulars of the Society to all who are interested.

Eton College Film Society, March, 1947

On the completion of the fifteenth year of its life, this Society has produced a duplicated summary of the programmes shown since its foundation. This can be obtained from the Secretary, who was, incidentally, on the Committee when the Society was started in 1931 (being then a boy in the school), and who has recently returned to the staff from the Navy.

This season's programmes have included *Film and Reality*, *Land of Promise*, "M", *Theirs is the Glory*, *Pimpernel Smith*, *Ten Little Niggers*, *Dear Octopus*, *A Yank at Eton*, and of shorts, *Under Western Skies*, *Chaplin's First Films*, *Felix Wins and Loses*, *Colour in Clay*, *Steel*, *Cyprus is an Island*, *Julius Caesar*, *Abu's Poisoned Well*, *Valley of the Tennessee* and *Myra Hess*.

It is hoped that there will be more 16 mm. activity when a new projector has been obtained.

Secretary: P. S. H. Lawrence, The River House, Eton, Windsor.

Film Appreciation Series (Vale of Leven Communist Party)

Commencing in September of last year, monthly lectures on "The History and Development of the Cinema" have proved popular with members of the Branch and friends. Concurrently with the lectures, suitable films have been shown at each meeting. As shows take place in the Party's premises, a 16 mm. Siemens projector has been utilised. Films shown include *A Selection of Early Films, 1896-1913*, *The Would-be Juggler*, *The Great Train Robbery*, *The Golf Game and the Bonnet*, *Methods of Communication*, *Postal Special*, *The Fireman*, *Simple Charity*, *Cargo from Jamaica* and excerpts from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *The Last Laugh*, *Metropolis*, *Hearts of the World* and *The End of St. Petersburg*. *An Italian Straw Hat* was shown in its entirety and future programmes will include *The Chef*, *The Cure*, *When We Build Again* and *Rubber for the Road*; excerpts from *Nanook of the North*, *Battleship Potemkin* and *The Ghost That Never Returns*. In May, the final programme of the season will include the full version of *Turksib*.

Out of this small venture it is now anticipated that serious steps will be taken to form a Film Society and/or Film Appreciation Class on a wide, popular basis. Enquiries will be welcomed and should be addressed to Mr. Alan S. Davis, 29, Leven Street, Renton, Dumbarton.

Monthly Film Bulletin

The following numbers of the British Film Institute "Monthly Film Bulletin", now out of print, are urgently required: 94, 101, 121, 124, 125, 127, 128, 129, 133, 134, 135, 139. R. R. MacEwen, Old National Bank Buildings, Inverness.

A WORD TO SOME FACILE CRITICS

TO THE EDITOR, SIGHT AND SOUND

SIR,—How much longer are we to be told by people who should know better that “until teachers are consulted by educational film producers, the profession will never get the films it wants”.

In addresses, articles, even books, variations of this theme appear so often that there is some danger of its being accepted as a statement of fact.

I don't know who was the first person to make (perhaps in a loose platform impromptu) this assertion. I first noticed it in pronouncements by my friend Pat Meredith. But, whoever started it, it sounds so impressive that it is now repeated either directly or by implication as a basic truth. Readers of SIGHT AND SOUND must be quite familiar with it.

The offending—because fallacious—word is “until”. Do the Merediths, Annakins, Bennells and others who so lightly dismiss in their articles some hundreds of existing films seriously believe that an educational film company would risk spending hundreds of pounds on a film for the use of teachers without first going into the closest conference with carefully-selected members of the profession—in other words, the “consumer”?

The catalogues of the films made with the panels of the British Film Institute must be known to these facile critics. Do they not know that group after group has at its head a note giving credit to the teacher supervisors (often even

committees of teachers) for their help? Of course, they know. Why, then, do they go on repeating these fallacious catch words? If there is no motive behind it, they should write more responsibly.

I am surprised, for instance, at my friend George Bennell, who repeats yet again (in your Autumn issue) that “film makers have not understood the function of educational films as tools of expression”. To whom is Mr. Bennell referring (perhaps unconsciously) when he talks of the makers of educational films? The teachers, at any rate, will know that he is referring to the pioneers who took great financial risks and provided by trial, error—and by great success—the first great collection of classroom films to which the teacher could turn.

Out of a thousand films that Bruce Woolfe, for instance, has made, several hundred are classroom and lecture theatre films. One is entitled to ask: How many films have George Bennell and the others made that would entitle them to pit their *experience* against that of Bruce Woolfe, Mary Field and Donald Carter?

It will do Mr. Bennell (and those others whose easy generalities have so far gone unchallenged), no good in the eyes of teachers to decry the achievements of the research pioneers whose work has provided the very criteria upon which they base their own experiments.

Yours faithfully,
DONALD A. MACKENZIE,
Principal, G.B.I. Education Division.

The Hayes (Mdsx.) Scientific Film Society. Report for 1946

The Hayes Scientific Film Society has been in existence since 1943. The past year, which began with the election of an almost entirely new committee, has been one of considerable success. Each show has been attended by some 120-130 people, and the total membership is now over 140. Some credit for the good attendances must be given to the extensive publicity which has been maintained even after the establishment of the bulk of the membership, to the excellent tea and pastries provided during the interval and to the practice of repeating the first hour of films at the end of the show. This enables members to arrive at any time between 6 and 7 p.m. However, enthusiasm for intelligent films has been the main factor in bringing people to the film shows on wet evenings.

During the 1946 season, for which the subscription was 7s. 6d., six regular film shows were given, consisting of numerous short films on assorted subjects. One special show of films on “Housing and Town Planning” was added, but it was found that members preferred a varied selection of subjects in each programme.

The Scientific Film Association, of which the Hayes Society is a member, secured the services of a speaker from the War Office to accompany the showing of *Personnel Selection—Recruits*, which was one of the most popular films projected. Dr. C. S. Bull, of the research department of the Gramophone Company, spoke on some diagram films of Atomic and Nuclear physics, which were lent to the society by Dr. Allibone, of Metropolitan Vickers, Ltd. Other films shown included *Salmon Run* and *Life on the Western Marshes*, two very popular coloured films, *World of Plenty*,

The City, *Night Mail*, *Kelvin—Master of Measurement*, *Galapagos*, *Development of the Chick*, *Aluminium Fabrication*, *A Harbour goes to France* and *Surgery in Chest Disease*, which proved too much for some members of the audience.

A questionnaire was circulated to all members of the audience inviting them to say whether more purely technical films should be included in the Society's programmes, or whether more general documentary films were desirable. The balance of votes came out slightly in favour of the documentary type of film, but no large change from the present balanced type of programme appears to be justified.

A new committee has been elected, the Secretary being Mr. H. Pursey, 2, Radnor Road, Harrow, Middlesex.

South Devon Film Society

This Society has been formed to cater for a specialised audience. Among the films it is hoped to show to our members during the first season are: *All that Money Can Buy* (American), *Frenzy* (Swedish), *Hortobagy* (Hungarian), *Fric-Frac* (French), *Ivan the Terrible* (Russian), *Portrait of Maria* (Mexican), *The Southerner* (American), *Day of Wrath* (Danish), *Les Visiteurs du Soir* (French), *Spectre of the Rose* (American). The Society's immediate objective is to provide one performance each month on a Sunday evening. If the membership increases as the Society expects, however, more frequent film shows and meetings can be arranged with programmes and facilities of a wider scope.

Please address all communications to: The Secretary, 1 Cary Place, Fleet Street, Torquay.

Dunfermline and West Fife Film Society

The season which has just concluded,

the fourth, has been most successful. The membership reached the record figure of 350 and the number of guests attending performances has been higher than in previous seasons.

Features shown were: *The Blue Angel*, *Marie Louise*, *Fantasia*, *General Suworov*, *Fin du Jour*, *Les Visiteurs du Soir* and *Une Femme Disparait*. Two 16 mm. performances were given, the films including *Cyprus is an Island*, *Diary for Timothy* and a number of Canadian documentaries. Mr. Joseph Macleod spoke on the Scottish Film industry at the first performance and later in the season members heard a talk on the work of Grierson given by Mr. Forsyth Hardy.

The Committee has lost two of its most active members, Mr. W. R. Aitken, chairman, and Mr. W. J. Murison, both librarians, who have taken up appointments in other parts of the country. The Society is hopeful of giving assistance in the formation of a society in Kirkcaldy.

The work of the Committee has been greatly facilitated by the ready assistance given by the manager and staff of the Palace Cinema. The manager, Mr. G. Gilchrist, is an honorary vice-president of the Society.

Stage and Screen, by Frank Shelley.

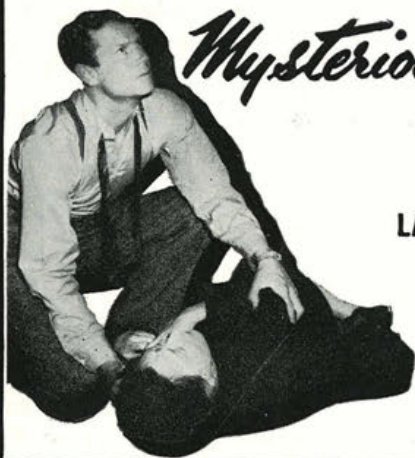
No. 1 in the Film Quarterly Series. (Pendulum Publications, 1947. 3s. 6d.).

This essay, which, with insertions, now appears in book form, one of several small volumes which have appeared recently from these publishers, was awarded the Blackwell Prize at the University of Aberdeen in 1941. The book contains reproductions of sixteen photographs of various well-known actors. It discusses, within limits, the differences between the theatre and the cinema.

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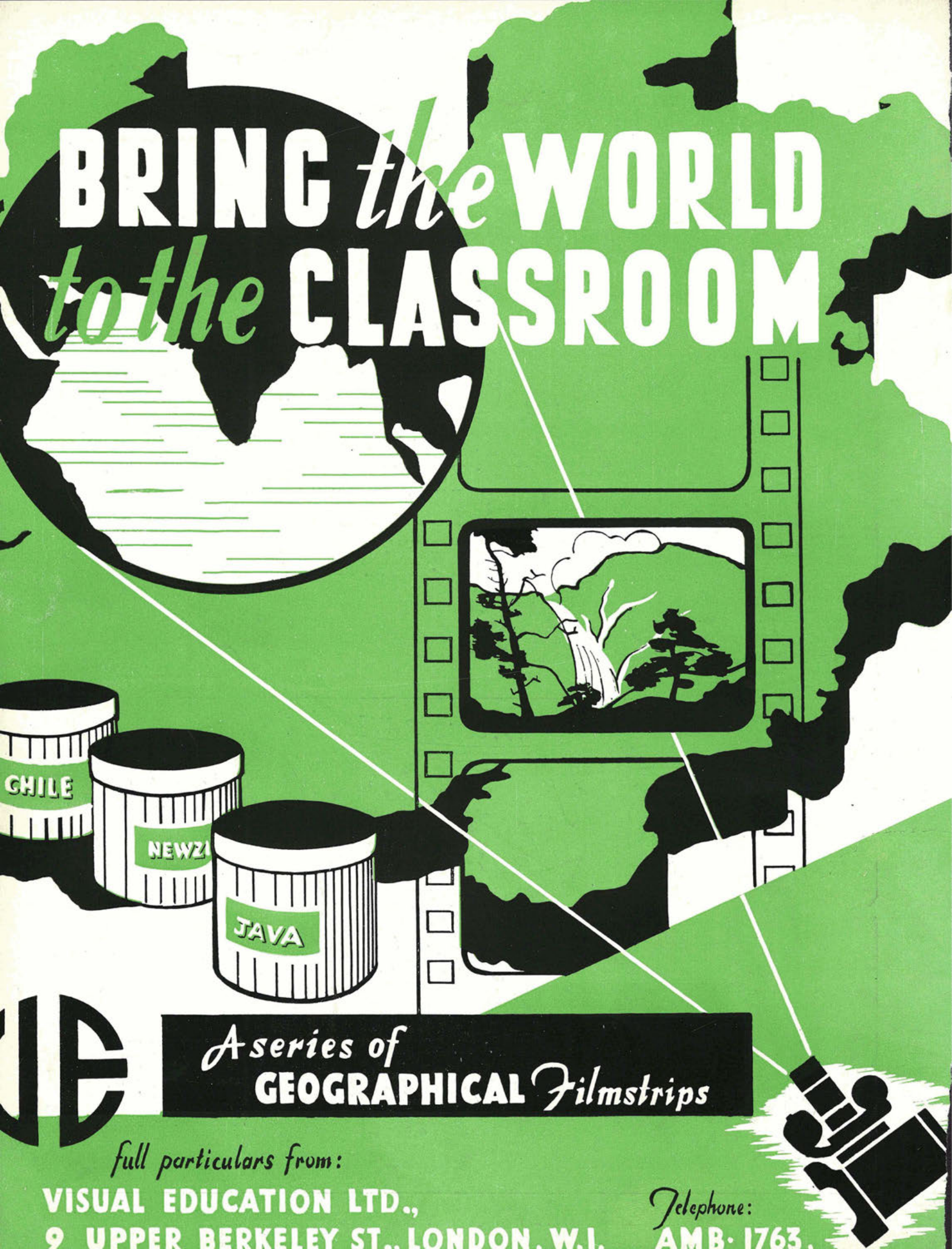
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